OXFORD

BASIL OF CAESAREA, GREGORY OF NYSSA, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF DIVINE SIMPLICITY



Andrew Radde-Gallwitz

OXFORD EARLY CHRISTIAN STUDIES

BASIL OF CAESAREA, GREGORY OF NYSSA, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF DIVINE SIMPLICITY

This page intentionally left blank

Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity

ANDREW RADDE-GALLWITZ

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

First published 2009

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available

Typeset by SPI Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
the MPG Books Group, Bodmin and King's Lynn

ISBN 978–0–19–957411–7

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

To Kristen, with love

This page intentionally left blank

Preface and Acknowledgements

This study was born at the intersection of two disciplinary trajectories: first, the ongoing reassessment by historians of theology of the doctrinal controversies that rocked the Mediterranean Christian world throughout the fourth century of the Common Era; and, second, an attempt by philosophers of religion and historians of philosophy to historicize controversial religious ideas such as divine simplicity. I hope it has something to say to both audiences and that it perhaps even raises questions about some of our current disciplinary boundaries, as well as about the canons of acceptable authors in each field.

To theologians, I offer a new reading of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa in the context of their debate with Eunomius. The picture painted here is less one of mystics devoted principally to the *via negativa* and only secondarily to the difficulties of thinking and writing Christian doctrine—as one sometimes encounters in the literature—and more one of subtle thinkers devoted to preserving the coherence and consistency of the myriad positive affirmations of Christian scripture and worship, while nonetheless acknowledging the ultimate incomprehensibility of God. Basil and Gregory reclaimed the idea of divine simplicity from Eunomius, all the while giving a rather unique construal of simplicity which the following study delineates. While the theology of Eunomius and the responses of Basil and Gregory are presented here as relatively original, I also propose that these authors are best read as responding to long-standing traditions in Christian theology going back to the second-century reactions to Marcion. I spend some time on the use of the language of divine simplicity prior to Basil and Gregory, and yet the book is intended less as an exhaustive survey of the idea in early Christian thought, and more as a focused analysis of its use by select, pivotal thinkers. A concluding section argues that the achievement of Basil and Gregory is best appreciated when it is *both* placed into its concrete historical context *and* seen as having ongoing relevance for Christian theology today.

To philosophers, I hope to have unearthed an alternative way of interpreting divine simplicity that has not heretofore received attention. I argue that late ancient philosophy contained resources for speaking about the knowledge of transcendent reality that have not been sufficiently explored in modern literature. When one encounters divine simplicity in modern philosophy of religion, one tends to find Thomas Aquinas's version of it. Without doubting the power of Aquinas's thinking on this subject, I hope to question whether his is the only legitimate way to articulate the idea.

This book began as a dissertation at Emory University under the direction of Professor Lewis Ayres. To Lewis I owe a profound debt of gratitude for his patient, wise, and deeply encouraging guidance of this project both at that stage and after. His work on the history of Christian doctrine has cleared this vineyard in which I and several others labour. Lewis has been and continues to be a teacher, mentor, friend, and not least an initiator into the mysteries of *The Outlaw Josey Wales.* I can only say, "I rode with him. I got no complaints."

I wish also to thank the other readers of the dissertation, Steven Strange, Kevin Corrigan, and Philip Reynolds. Professor Strange's seminars in ancient philosophy and his weekly Greek reading groups were fundamental in developing this thesis. His devotion to teaching graduate students is unparalleled and I am fortunate to have benefited from it. I thank Professors Roberta Bondi at Emory, Warren Smith and David B. Hart at Duke Divinity, and especially Richard Goode at Lipscomb University, who first showed me that Christian discipleship need not involve the repression of difficult questions, but can actually live off this difficulty: all have been excellent teachers and models of theological endeavour.

Heartfelt thanks are also due to Professor Tina Brownley and all the staff at the Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry for their generous support and warm hospitality during my final year at Emory. Thanks to all the Center's Fellows, especially Professor Corrigan, who listened to and commented on my research. Since coming to Loyola, I have revised the dissertation considerably. I am grateful for the advice and encouragement I have received from many colleagues in the Theology Department during this time, especially Mark McIntosh, my chairs Patti Jung and Susan Ross, and our wonderful support staff Catherine Wolf and Marianne Wolfe.

Mark DelCogliano has been the friend and collaborator every scholar hopes to find. Our work of translating Basil's *Against Eunomius* together opened up Basil's thought to me and shaped what appears here. His friendship and collegiality continue to be of inestimable value to me. A number of other friends graced me with their support, wisdom, and humour during the writing of this book. I think especially of Chris Horne, Ryan Babcock, Kate Wilkinson, Annie and Joe Bullock, and Matt Chambers, lawyer and banjoist. The Catholic communities of Sts Peter and Paul in Decatur, GA and St Ita in Chicago have sustained me in numerous ways.

Professors Andrew Louth and Gillian Clark, the editors of Oxford Early Christian Studies, provided helpful and encouraging feedback at various stages in the preparation of this book. I am humbled by the support shown by such eminent scholars. I am also deeply grateful to an anonymous reader whose detailed comments greatly improved this text. Tom Perridge and Elizabeth Robottom of Oxford University Press have guided me through the editorial process and fielded my queries with grace and expertise. Thanks also to Jenny Wagstaffe. Olegs Andrejevs, a Loyola graduate student in New Testament and Early Christianity, read the entire manuscript with care, saving me from numerous infelicities and generally clarifying the exposition. Remaining errors are of course my own.

My mother and father continue to be models of faith and charity. I certainly would not have made it through graduate school without their unconditional love and support. They deserve more thanks than I can offer here. So too does Jay Gallwitz, my brother, friend, and as challenging and brilliant a thinker as I have met.

Finally, I feel a rather Cappadocian embarrassment at the poverty of language as I thank my wife, Kristen, for her faith in my work and her courageous support throughout my graduate study and to this day. Without her patient love and her penetrating critical mind, this study would not have seen the light of day. This book is dedicated to her.

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Abbreviations xiii
Note to the Reader xix

Introduction 1
The Uniqueness of Basil and Gregory 1
Outline of Chapters 14

1. Simplicity and the Problem of Contradiction: Ptolemy and the Legacy of Marcion 19
Perceptions of Marcion 23
Ptolemy on "Self-subsistent Light, Simple and Uniform" 31

2. From Science to Silence: Clement of Alexandria and Origen 38
Clement's Theological Science 40
Clement's Radical Apophaticism 49
Origen on Simplicity and "Conceptualizations" (ἐπίνοιαι) 59

3. Agen(n)êtos and the Identity Thesis: Justin, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Athanasius 67
God as Ingenerate 69
Athanasius of Alexandria on Simplicity and Theological Language 78

4. "Truly Repay the Debt": Aetius and Eunomius of Cyzicus 87
Aetius 90
Eunomius 96

5. Basil of Caesarea I: On Not Knowing God's Essence (But Still Knowing God) 113
A Central Tension: 'Common Usage' and Purification 114
Key Distinctions 122

6. Basil of Caesarea II: Concepts, Reality, and Reading 143
Conceptualization ('*Επίνοια*) 143
Simplicity and the Unity of God 154
Simplicity and Reading Scripture Doctrinally 169

7. “Therefore Be Perfect as your Heavenly Father is Perfect”:
   Gregory of Nyssa on Simplicity and Goodness 175
   Gregory’s Defence of Basil 177
   The ‘Goods’ 182
   Simplicity and the Trinity 212
   Anthropology and the Simplicity of the Soul 218
   Saving Gregory from his Defenders 221

Conclusion: The Transformation of Divine Simplicity 225

Bibliography 236
Index 251

Abbreviations

General

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers. Mahwah, NJ: Newman/Paulist Press.
ANF	A Select Library of Ante-Nicene Christian Fathers
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1972–)
CAG	Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca. Berlin: Reimer, 1882–1909.
CHHP	Keimpe Algra, et al., eds. *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
CUA	The Catholic University of America
FoC	The Fathers of the Church. Washington, DC: CUA Press.
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
GNO	Gregorii Nysseni opera
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JHP	*Journal of the History of Philosophy*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
LS	A. A. Long and David Sedley, eds. *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
LSJ	H. George Liddell, Robert Scott, and H. Stuart Jones. *A Greek–English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968.
NPNF	A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (2nd series unless otherwise indicated)
OCT	Oxford Classical Texts. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
PG	J.-P. Migne. Patrologia cursus completus (series Graeca). Paris.
RHPR	*Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*

SC	Sources Chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf.
SP	*Studia Patristica*
SPCK	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
SVF	J. von Arnim, ed. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* 3 vols. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1903–4; vol. 4 (indexes) by M. Adler.
TLG	Thesaurus Linguae Graecae. Irvine, CA: University of California, Irvine. <http://www.tlg.uci.edu>
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VCS	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae. Leiden: Brill.
ZAC	*Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für neutestamentlische Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*

Abbreviations of all Greek patristic works follow G. W. H. Lampe. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, unless otherwise indicated. Abbreviations and full bibliographic entries are provided below for works of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa cited in this study.

Works of Basil of Caesarea

Ep. *Epistulae* (*Letters*)

Yves Courtonne, ed. *Saint Basile: Lettres*. 3 volumes. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1957–66.

Roy Deferrari, trans. *Basil: Letters*. 4 volumes. LCL 190, 215, 243, 270. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926ff.

Eun. *Adversus Eunomium libri tres* (*Three Books Against Eunomius*)

Bernard Sesboüé, SJ, with Georges-Matthieu de Durand, OP, and Louis Doutreleau, SJ, eds. and trans. *Basile de Césarée: Contre Eunome, suivi de Eunome: Apologie*. SC 299, 305. Paris: Cerf, 1982–3.

Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, trans. *St. Basil of Caesarea: Against Eunomius*. FoC. Washington, DC: CUA Press, forthcoming.

Fid. *De Fide* (*On the Faith*).

PG 31, 464–72.

Sr M. Monica Wagner, trans. *St. Basil: Ascetical Works*. FoC 9. Washington, DC: CUA, 1962, 57–69.

Hex. *Homiliae in hexaemeron* (*Homilies on the Six Days of Creation*)

Stanislas Giet, ed. *Basile de césarée: Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron*. SC 26. Paris: Cerf, 1949.

Blomfield Jackson, trans. *The Treatise De Spiritu Sancto, the Nine Homilies of the Hexaemeron and the Letters*. NPNF 8. Orig. pub. 1895, repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999, 52–107; Sr Agnes Clare Way, trans. *Saint Basil: Exegetic Homilies*. FoC 46. Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1963, 3–150.

Hom. *Homiliae* (*Homilies*)

PG 31.

S. Y. Rudberg, ed. *L'homélie de Basile d'Césarée sur le mot 'observe-toi toi-même'*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962.

Nonna Verna Harrison, trans. *St. Basil the Great: On the Human Condition*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005.

Spir. *Liber de Spiritu sancto* (*On the Holy Spirit*)

Benoît Pruche, OP, ed. and trans. *Basile de Césarée: Sur le Saint-Espirit*. 2nd edn. SC 17bis. Paris: Cerf, 2002.

Blomfield Jackson, trans., NPNF 8, 1–50; David Anderson, trans. *St. Basil the Great: On the Holy Spirit*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.

Works of Gregory of Nyssa

anim. et res. *De anima et resurrectione* (*On the Soul and the Resurrection*)

PG 44.

Catharine P. Roth, trans. *St. Gregory of Nyssa: On the Soul and Resurrection*. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.

Apoll. *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium* (*Against Apollinarius*)

Fridericus Mueller, ed. *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Dogmatica Minora. Pars I*. GNO 3.1. Leiden: Brill, 1958, 129–233.

beat. 1–8 *orationes de beatitudinibus* (*On the Beatitudes*)

Johannes F. Callahan, ed. *Gregorii Nysseni De Oratione Dominica, De Beatitudinibus*. GNO 7.2. Leiden: Brill, 1992, 75–170.

Hilda C. Graef, trans. *St. Gregory of Nyssa: The Lord's Prayer, The Beatitudes*. ACW 18. New York: Paulist Press, 1954, 85–175.

comm. not. *adversus Graecos ex communibus notionibus* (*Against the Greeks on the basis of common notions*)
Fridericus Mueller, ed. GNO 3.1, 17–33.

deit. *de deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti* (*On the Divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit*)

PG 46.

ep. *Epistulae* (*Letters*)

Georgius Pasquali, ed. *Gregorii Nysseni Epistulae.* GNO 8.2. Leiden: Brill, 1959; Pierre Maraval, ed. *Grégoire de Nysse: Lettres.* SC 363. Paris: Cerf, 1990.

Anna M. Silvas, trans. *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters. Introduction, Translation and Commentary.* VCS 83. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007.

Eun. *contra Eunomium* (*Against Eunomius*)

Wernerus Jaeger, ed. *Contra Eunomium Libri. Pars Prior: Liber I et II (Vulgo I et XIIB)*. GNO 1. Leiden: Brill, 1960; idem, ed. *Contra Eunomium Libri. Pars Altera: Liber III (Vulgo III–XII), Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii (Vulgo Lib. II)*. GNO 2. Leiden: Brill, 1960.

Book 1: Stuart G. Hall, trans. in Lucas F. Mateo-Seco and Juan L. Bastero, eds. *El 'Contra Eunomium' en la Producción Literaria de Gregorio de Nisa.* VI Coloquio Internacional sobre Gregorio de Nisa. Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, SA, 1988, 35–138.

Book 2: Stuart G. Hall, trans. in Lenka Karfíková, Scot Douglass, and Johannes Zachhuber, eds. *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II.* Proceedings of the 10th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa. VCS 82. Leiden: Brill, 2007, 59–201.

Book 3: William Moore and Henry A. Wilson, trans. NPNF 5.

hex. *apologia in hexaemeron* (*Defence on the Six Days of Creation*)

PG 44.

hom. 1–15 in Cant. *homiliae in Canticum Canticorum* (*Homilies on the Song of Songs*)

Hermannus Langerbeck, ed. *Gregorii Nysseni in Canticum Canticorum.* GNO 6. Leiden: Brill, 1960.

hom. 1–8 in Eccl. *homiliae in Ecclesiasten* (*Homilies on Ecclesiastes*)

J. McDonough, ed. GNO 5; Stuart George Hall, trans. *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on Ecclesiastes.* Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993.

hom. opif. *de hominis opificio* (*On the Making of Humanity*)

PG 44.

H. A. Wilson, trans. in William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, *Select Writings and Letters of Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa.* NPNF 5.

infant. de infantibus qui praemature abripiuntur (*On Infants who Prematurely Die*)

PG 46.

William Moore, trans. NPNF 5, 372–81.

instit. *de instituto Christiano* (*On the Christian Way of Life*)

W. Jaeger, J. P. Cavarnos, and V. W. Callahan, eds. *Gregorii Nysseni opera ascetica*. GNO 8.1. Leiden: Brill, 1952, 1–89.

V. W. Callahan, trans. in *St. Gregory: Ascetical Works*. FoC 58. Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1967, 123–58.

Maced. *de Spiritu sancto contra Macedonianos* (*On the Holy Spirit against the Macedonians*)

F. Mueller, ed. GNO 3.1, 87–116.

NPNF 5, 315–25.

or. catech. *oratio catechetica* (*Catechetical Oration*)

Ekkehardus Mühlenberg, ed. *Gregorii Nysseni oratio catechetica*. GNO 3.4. Leiden: Brill, 1996; James Herbert Srawley, ed. *The Catechetical Oration of Gregory of Nyssa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956.

Cyril C. Richardson, trans. 'An Address on Religious Instruction'. In Edward R. Hardy, ed. *Christology of the Later Fathers*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954, 268–325; NPNF 5, 471–509.

or. dom. 1–5 *homiliae in orationem dominicam* (*Homilies on the Lord's Prayer*)

Johannes F. Callahan, ed. GNO 7.2, 1–74.

Hilda C. Graef, trans. ACW 18, 21–84.

Pss. titt. *Psalmorum tituli* (*On the Inscriptions of the Psalms*)

J. McDonough, ed. *Gregorii Nysseni in inscriptiones Psalmorum, in sextum psalmum, in ecclesiasten homiliae*. GNO 5. Leiden: Brill, 1962.

Ronald E. Heine, trans. *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

tres dii *quod non sint tres dii* (*That we do not say there are three Gods*)

F. Mueller, ed. GNO 3.1, 35–57.

H. A. Wilson, trans. NPNF 5, 331–7.

Trin. *ad Eustathium de Trinitate* (*To Eustathius on the Trinity*)

F. Mueller, ed. GNO 3.1, 1–16.

Anna M. Silvas, trans. *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters. Introduction, Translation and Commentary*. VCS 83. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007, 232–45.

v. Macr. *de vita Macrinae* (*The Life of Macrina*)

W. Jaeger et al., eds. GNO 8.1, 347–414.

V. W. Callahan, trans. FoC 58, 159–91.

v. Mos. *de vita Mosis* (*The Life of Moses*)

Jean Daniélou, SJ, ed. *Grégoire de Nysse: La Vie de Moïse, ou Traité de la Perfection en Matière de Vertu.* 3rd edn. SC 1bis. Paris: Cerf, 2000.

Abraham J. Mahlerbe and Everett Ferguson, trans. *Gregory of Nyssa: The Life of Moses.* New York: Paulist Press, 1978.

virg. *de virginitate* (*On Virginity*)

Michel Aubineau, ed. *Grégoire de Nysse: Traité de la Virginité.*

SC 119. Paris: Cerf, 1966.

V. W. Callahan, trans. FoC 58, 3–78.

Note to the Reader

Since this study is so centrally concerned with terminology, I have found it helpful to adopt a convention to signal when I am dealing with a term as opposed to the thing or concept to which the term refers. Accordingly, single quotation marks (‘’) signal when I am discussing a term. Double quotation marks (“”) signal a specific quotation. Thus, I will speak of the usage of the term ‘good’ in an author; but, when I am dealing with a specific text, it will be “good”.

Furthermore, all translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. There are two translation decisions I wish to highlight at the outset. First, I have rendered both ἀγέννητος (the privative passive adjective from γεννάω, ‘I beget, engender’) and ἀγένητος (the privative passive adjective from γίγνομαι, ‘I come into being’) as ‘ingenerate’. While some authors distinguish the two terms, I use ‘ingenerate’ because it covers both meanings and therefore leaves the interpretation of specific authors’ use of the term underdetermined. I have no qualms with using ‘unbegotten’ as a translation for ἀγέννητος; I simply hope to underscore the continuity between discussions of this Greek term and discussions of ἀγένητος.

Second, I have rendered οὐσία as both ‘essence’ and ‘substance’, depending on the context. Usually, the choice between these makes little difference for interpreting the content of an author’s arguments. However, in the case of Gregory of Nyssa, I argue that he distinguishes—though not entirely consistently—between ‘essence’ and ‘substance’, using οὐσία for the latter and various locutions for the former. ‘Essence’, then, will denote the sum of a thing’s necessary properties, the properties whose corresponding terms constitute the thing’s formal definition. ‘Substance’ will denote a metaphysically independent reality, a persistent ‘thing’, considered in abstraction from its accidental, that is, non-necessary, features. Socrates (a substance, together with a bunch of accidents) will have an essence (say, being a rational animal) that makes him a human being, which is what he is necessarily. The distinction is a fine one, flying as it does in the face of ordinary usage. And Gregory seems only inchoately to

grasp its significance. But if we allow it, it has monumental implications. While it is hard to see how essence and substance would be *metaphysically* distinct in God, it is not as hard to see how an *epistemological* distinction might be drawn. Gregory wants to claim knowledge of God *in se* without defining God. The distinction between substance and essence allows him to do just this. Just as one might come to know Socrates in and of himself without knowing the definition of humanity, so too might one come to know God without knowing the divine essence.

Nor does this knowledge need to be lacking in content, provided that we grant Basil and Gregory's understanding of 'propria', which is our final term to discuss here. This (plural) term of art is the Latin translation of a set of Greek terms deriving from the adjective *ἴδιος*, whose basic meanings include "one's own, pertaining to oneself" and "separate, distinct".[1] Substantive terms derived from this—such as *τὸ ἴδιον* and *ἡ ἰδιότης*—came, in philosophical tradition, to denote characteristic features of a species. This terminology can be used to denote features traditionally thought of as accidental, such as medical skills in a human being, Smith. Smith could forget how to doctor and still be Smith, and certainly still be a human being. Moreover, Jones may be unable to doctor without being less of a human being. But the language of propria also, and more properly, denotes features that in every case go along with the species, such as the ability to laugh or risibility of humans, or the ability to neigh of horses. It is propria of this sort that Basil and Gregory have in mind when they use the terminology to speak of God's attributes. Just as we cannot think of a horse that cannot neigh, we cannot think of God without goodness. The ability to neigh is no part of the essence of a horse (i.e. neighing will not be included in any definition of 'horse' through genus and difference). Yet, so the account goes, it is a necessary truth that if something is a horse, it is able to neigh, and if something is able to neigh, it is a horse. Thus, there is a kind of non-essential necessity with properties of this sort, which distinguishes them from strictly accidental properties. The notion of 'non-essential necessity' will sound like a contradiction in terms to those modern readers for

[1] LSJ, s.v. I, II.

whom X's essential properties just are X's necessary properties, the properties of X that belong to it in any possible world. To borrow from this modal language, not without some consternation, one can say that for Basil and Gregory, God is good in every possible world, and goodness is what we mean when we say 'God', yet we have no grounds for saying that goodness is the essence of God: that it is what makes God, God. It will be the burden of the following to show why such a notion made sense to Basil and Gregory and why they found it important to draw such neat distinctions in theological discourse.

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

THE UNIQUENESS OF BASIL AND GREGORY

Your desire for information, my right well-beloved and most deeply respected brother Amphilochius, I highly commend, and not less your industrious energy. I have been exceedingly delighted at the care and watchfulness shewn in the expression of your opinion that of all the terms concerning God in every mode of speech, not one ought to be left without exact investigation. You have turned to good account your reading of the exhortation of the Lord, "Everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth."[1]

The "exact investigation" of theological language which the Cappadocian bishop, Basil of Caesarea, commends in this passage is the subject of this book. In the late fourth century, theological language and the related problem of what humans can and cannot know about God had become suddenly problematic. It is the purpose of this study to unpack the nature and significance of this problem and the peculiarities of the response to it given by Basil and his younger brother, Gregory, whom he appointed bishop of Nyssa.

The problem Basil and Gregory faced was reconciling the doctrine of divine simplicity with a coherent theological epistemology. Both parts of this require explanation. To say that God is simple is to deny that there is any composition in God whatsoever. This implies that there are no material parts that come together to constitute God. But it also implies that the apparently diverse attributes

[1] Basil of Caesarea, *Spir.* 1.1 (trans. Blomfield Jackson, NPNF 8, p. 2).

people customarily ascribe to God are not diverse after all: or at least not diverse in the way the properties of objects of our ordinary experience are diverse. More on this in a moment. For now I need to address the notion of theological epistemology, since this is not a term in common use.

By 'theological epistemology', I mean a domain of enquiry centred on the kind of reflexive question that arises when a believer asks, 'What must my knowing be like if its "object" is God?' Of particular interest are two questions. First, there is a question of which properties one ought to ascribe to God: is God just or merciful or both, eternal or temporal, immanent or transcendent or both, and so forth. Clearly, there is a potential for tension and contradiction among the various claims one wishes to make about God. Tensions of this sort, as we will see, fuelled many of the debates about divine simplicity. The second aspect of theological epistemology is the question of how these properties are to be ascribed to God. Perhaps I know what it means to attribute mercy to a human being. But what do I mean when I ascribe it to God? What am I assuming about the relation between God and God's mercy? In the late ancient discussions we will be considering, this is simultaneously a metaphysical and a logical question. In metaphysical terms, we can ask the question in the following way. When we say that God is just, for instance, what are we presuming about the relation between God's essence or nature (what it is to be God) and God's justice? Is it the same as the relation between, say, Socrates' justice and his human nature, or is there something fundamentally different involved in ascribing properties to God? Is God's justice *identical* with God's nature? In logical terms, we can ask it as a question about predication: in what logical category do we predicate the term 'justice' of God? Does it name a quality, or is it in the category of substance? If it names God's essence, does it do so as a definition of God?

This second area of concern within theological epistemology links it to issues of general epistemology. For it will often be the case that the way in which one explains the logic of attribution of properties to God will be shaped by the standards one believes must be met for knowledge in any case. Ancient epistemology since Plato and Aristotle had been shaped by a concern with discovering the essences of things. That is, to know something meant to be able to

explain it: to state what makes it the kind of thing it is, in other words, its essence.[2] And to state this essence was to state the thing's definition. In other words, the definitions philosophers looked for were not primarily definitions of *words* but of *realities*, especially of natural 'kinds' such as humanity or of forms such as justice. Knowing such definitions was held to be basic to knowing at all: in order to know something as beautiful, in order reliably and consistently to identify instances of beauty, one must know the essence of beauty. This is the thesis known as the epistemological priority of definition.[3]

This thesis will haunt the present study, because if one holds that knowing something (as opposed to merely having true beliefs about it) requires one to know its essence, and one wishes to claim knowledge of God, then it is likely that one will be inclined to claim that the attributes one predicates of God name God's essence. In Chapter 4, I will argue that it is a modified version of the principle of the epistemological priority of definition which drives Eunomius' claim to know God's essence. Though it may be less obvious, I will argue in Chapter 2 that the same principle underlies Clement's negative theology—that is, his claim that we do not *know* God. For both, knowledge depends in some fundamental way on knowing essences. And this is where Basil and Gregory part ways with them: for the Cappadocian brothers, having reliable knowledge of something is not dependent upon knowing its essence. It will be the burden of Chapters 5 to 7 to unpack how they articulated a theological epistemology that did not include the epistemological priority of definition. As I discuss in the Conclusion, their dissociation of knowing God from this principle lies at the centre of their transformation of divine simplicity.

[2] See the account of the interconnection of defining and explaining in Aristotle in David Charles, *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), esp. chs. 10 and 13.

[3] For a discussion of the thesis in Plato's Socratic dialogues (with references to the rather extensive literature on this), see Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, *Plato's Socrates* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 45–55. Brickhouse and Smith do not believe Socrates holds this thesis, at least as ascribed to him by many scholars.

These issues of what we predicate of God and what is the logic of its predication are the questions of theological epistemology. They are distinct from those addressed in modern philosophical literature on 'religious' epistemology.[4] The central question in the latter is, 'Under what conditions is someone's holding of religious belief X justified?' 'Theological epistemology' is my label for the problem of the knowledge of God, that is the question of what can and cannot be known of God, considered in abstraction from the question of whether this knowledge is justified. 'Theological epistemology' names the attempt to articulate the logic of knowledge and attribution in the case of God, and not the attempt to justify the things known or attributed. Indeed, the authors we will discuss take for granted the value of certain terms, not simply for 'knowing' God in the abstract, but even for glorifying God in worship and prayer. In asking the kinds of difficult, perhaps obsessive questions they do about these terms, they are attempting not to provide a map of divine reality, a conceptual model into which to place the God of Christian scripture; they are rather trying, in however tentative a fashion, to classify Christian praise.

Divine simplicity poses a problem for theological epistemology, thus understood, because to think through the complex terrain of biblical and doxological language is to think discursively, reasoning bit by bit in a logical and temporal progression. But how can humans, who think in this way, come to know a simple God, who is not subject to any kind of progression or sequence? Theologians have responded to this problem in different ways. Some have denied that knowledge with any positive content can be had of a simple being: given our limited conceptual resources, we cannot attribute anything to God. This is the position of Clement of Alexandria, and while the great third-century Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus lies outside the scope of this study, he is also representative of this kind of radical negative theology. Although Basil and especially Gregory have received considerable attention in relation to the development of apophatic or negative theology, it is clear that neither of them endorses anything nearly as stark as Clement's or Plotinus'

[4] See Peter Forrest, 'The Epistemology of Religion', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2006 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2006/entries/religion-epistemology/>.

apophaticism.[5] The theology of Basil and Gregory abounds with positive statements about God; as we will see, some of these claims are even positive claims about the very nature of God.

Some theologians have taken the doctrine of divine simplicity to entail that every term one attributes to God names God's essence or substance, and that, metaphysically, God's essence and God's properties are in fact identical. I call the latter claim the 'identity thesis'. It is precisely the thesis that Basil and Gregory faced in the version articulated by Eunomius of Cyzicus, their principal doctrinal opponent. The identity thesis, in a vastly more sophisticated version, would be the interpretation of divine simplicity given by such theological authorities as Augustine[6] and Aquinas.[7] It has also become an almost universal presupposition of contemporary discussions of divine simplicity among philosophers of religion. Among them, it is taken as an analytic truth that if God is simple, God is identical with his properties; that is, the latter is taken as the meaning of the former.[8] But this interpretation of the meaning of simplicity itself has a history.

[5] See esp. Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence II: The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1986), chs. 9–10.

[6] For discussion, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), ch. 15; on the identity thesis, see esp. pp. 376ff.

[7] For Aquinas's position, see *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 3. For discussion, see Christopher Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God: An Investigation in Aquinas' Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

[8] As true of opponents of the doctrine (e.g. Alvin Plantinga) as of supporters (e.g. Barry Miller). Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980), 26–27 unpacks the doctrine thus: "God does indeed have a nature; but he is identical with it . . . We cannot distinguish [God] from his nature or his nature from his existence, or his existence from his other properties; he is the very same thing as his nature, existence, goodness, wisdom, power and the like." Barry Miller, *A Most Unlikely God: A Philosophical Enquiry* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 11: "What, then, is the doctrine of divine simplicity? Brief and most generally, it is the claim that in God there is no composition of any kind whatever . . . These are negative claims . . . Positively, however, the divine simplicity means that God is identical with his existence, nature, and his real properties (though not his Cambridge properties)." Cf. also the well-known defence by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann: 'Absolute Simplicity', *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (1985): 353–82 at 356–7. There are exceptions: Joshua Hoffman and Gary S. Rosenkrantz defend a 'weaker' version of simplicity, one that does not link it with identity, but with God lacking spatial and temporal parts: *The Divine Attributes* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 59–68. They reject the identity thesis as "unacceptable" at 67–8.

Moreover, it is an interpretation that Basil and Gregory go to great lengths to oppose. They endorse the doctrine of divine simplicity. However, they rightly perceive that the identity interpretation of it, in the version they encounter in Eunomius' theology, conflicts with the inherent complexity of the knowledge of God, and if any theory does this, so much the worse for the theory. We must leave open the issue of how they would have responded to a version of the identity thesis, such as Augustine's or Aquinas', that allows for genuine complexity in religious language, where simplicity is compatible with ascribing terms to God that are not understood to be synonyms. That is, one must leave unanswered how they would respond to a theologian who holds the metaphysical thesis that God's essence and attributes are identical (which Basil and Gregory do not endorse) and who holds the logical thesis that divine attribute names are not synonyms for one another (which they do endorse).

My fundamental claim in this book is that Basil and Gregory transformed divine simplicity.[9] They did so by articulating a version of the doctrine of divine simplicity that avoids the horns of total apophaticism and the identity thesis (as they encountered it in Eunomius), while still playing its by-then traditional role within the Christian tradition. It needed to serve as a way of sanctioning the attribution of *contradictory* properties to God. Put in positive terms, it needed to serve the function, which it had in a range of early Christian texts, of explicating the consistency of God. To say God is simple is to provide a sort of second-order rule for speaking about God.[10] At the most basic, affirming divine simplicity means that if one says 'God is just' and 'God is merciful' one does not view God's justice and mercy as *parts* of God. But, additionally, it means that one should not take these attributes as contradicting one another—since only complex beings can have contradictory properties at the same time. If one claims divine

[9] An initial sense of Gregory's use of the language of simplicity, together with references to instances, can be gleaned from the articles under ἁπλότης and ἁπλοῦς in Friedhelm Mann (ed.), *Lexicon Gregorianum: Wörterbuch zu den Schriften Gregors von Nyssa, Band I: ἀβαρής–ἄωρος* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 458–61.

[10] Cf. David Burrell's account of simplicity as a "formal feature" rather than just another divine attribute, perhaps most accessibly found in David Burrell, 'Distinguishing God from the World', in idem, *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 3–19.

simplicity, one cannot hold that there is any tension or struggle in God between justice and mercy. Rather, one must articulate the sense in which God is both, reject one or the other, or assign the contradictory attributes to distinct 'levels' of divine reality—the latter was at any rate an option *up until* the Cappadocians.

The doctrine of simplicity *as it was used in early Christian literature*, then, was not primarily a way of articulating God's aseity and immutability in the abstract. It was not discussed by patristic authors as a 'purely philosophical' concept easily separable from exegetical and doctrinal concerns. Rather, it entered into basic debates about who God is in light of revelation. These debates stand at the heart of the 'development' of Christian doctrine. Indeed, Rowan Williams has suggested that this concern with God's consistency is a unifying factor in the history of doctrinal development:

> The meaning of 'God' as displayed in the history of Israel and the Church has to do with the historical realities of transformation or renewal of such scope that they only be ascribed to an agency free from the conditions of historical contingency, and one that challenges rather than endorses what claims to be the heights of moral and spiritual attainment. And it is out of this meaning of 'God' that there gradually develops the fully articulated doctrine of God characteristic of patristic and medieval theology: the unconditioned act of self-diffusion and self-sharing upon which all things depend—with the important corollary that this act is 'simple', it is what it is without the admixture of elements or constraints from beyond itself, and so is entirely at one with itself, consistent and faithful.[11]

One finds the language of simplicity in a range of authors, from the mid-second century onward, who tried to sort out the coherence of the revealed picture(s) of God in Christian scripture. Simplicity enters discussions in which authors ask, 'If God is like *this*, can we say that God did *that*, as it is recorded?' The question then becomes: is there contradiction among the properties one wishes to attribute to God (assuming one wishes to ascribe properties to God)? We will see various answers to this question. For the second-century 'Valentinian' author Ptolemy, there is a contradiction between the activities of creating the world and authoring the Biblical Law, on one

[11] Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 21.

hand, and the absolute perfection that is characteristic of the first principle, on the other hand. But the first principle, being simple, cannot be internally discordant; consequently, the activities of creating and legislating must belong to a lower level of divine reality than the absolutely first principle. We will begin with Ptolemy because he so clearly shows the impact the doctrine of divine simplicity, with its attendant thesis of divine non-contradiction, had upon Christian exegetical discussions. For Aetius and Eunomius, there is a fundamental contradiction in saying that the simple divine essence is simultaneously without beginning or 'ingenerate' (ἀγέννητος) and begotten or 'generate' (γεννητός). These contradictory properties cannot both characterize a *simple* substance. Like Ptolemy, they relegate one of the contradictory terms to a lower level of divinity. According to Basil and especially Gregory, it is Eunomius who has subjected God to contradiction: in subordinating the Son to the Father, he has unwittingly mixed the divine goodness with its opposite. For Gregory, to say God is simple is to say that the divine goodness is unmixed with its one contradictory, evil. Basil and Gregory participate in this long tradition of speaking of simplicity in connection with the problem of divine consistency. And yet their response is unique.

Unfortunately, the peculiarities of Basil and Gregory's response to the problem of theological epistemology in the face of divine simplicity have not received sufficient scholarly attention. On one hand, many scholars have lingering Harnackian doubts about the validity of early Christian uses of Greek philosophy. Divine simplicity is an idea that early Christians appropriated from the philosophy of the day; without claiming to exhaust the issue, we will trace some of this influence throughout this book. For many theologians, this still constitutes an objection to divine simplicity, and historians of doctrine have often timidly avoided discussing simplicity, the better to elude criticisms of early Christian thought as a 'sell-out' to Greek philosophy. Fortunately, there is a growing consensus that the basic assumptions of this narrative are inadequate.[12] The opposition between a pure, 'biblical' Christian faith and a rationalistic Greek

[12] For searching criticism of the theory that theology 'fell' through its contact with Greek philosophy, see Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

philosophy has been called into question by studies such as Michel Barnes's work on Gregory of Nyssa.[13] Barnes has shown how a technical philosophical understanding of 'power' shaped Gregory of Nyssa's—and a range of other early Christians'—explication of the scriptural notion of the power of God, a site of controversy in his day. Moreover, recent work by Lewis Ayres has given the doctrine of divine simplicity a central role in the story of the development of Christian doctrine, in particular in the development of the kinds of self-conscious accounts of theological epistemology and language that will be our focus.[14]

On the other hand, before the recent work of Ayres and Barnes just mentioned, the few scholars who did attend to divine simplicity in early Christian authors as philosophically interesting tended to deny the coherence of the doctrine. The clearest example of this is the work of Christopher Stead. Stead discussed patristic notions of divine simplicity in a number of works.[15] His work has influenced many aspects of this study. Part of Stead's contribution was to point out the fact that the idea of simplicity is not so simple after all. This is the case both owing to the difficulty of neatly distinguishing 'simple' from 'composite'[16] and because the term simplicity and its synonyms are used by patristic authors with different meanings, but with no acknowledgement of this equivocation.[17] The present study confirms these points generally—though in my discussion of the Cappadocians I argue that they precisely did acknowledge their disagreement with Eunomius on the meaning of simplicity. Accordingly, with Stead, I am suspicious of the argument, originating with

[13] See, esp., *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2001).

[14] *Nicaea and its Legacy*, esp. chs. 11, 14, and 15.

[15] Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 180–9; idem, 'Divine Simplicity as a Problem for Orthodoxy', in Rowan Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 255–69; idem, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 120–35, esp. 130–5.

[16] As argued in 'Divine Simplicity as a Problem', 257–9.

[17] *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, 130: "the word *haplous*, 'simple', and its equivalents (*amerês*, *asunthetos*), are used in different contexts which really call for distinct definitions of the term; though the need for this, it seems, was not remarked."

Plato and common in patristic literature,[18] that one can easily categorize objects into simple versus complex and infer that the former are immutable because they are not the latter. Surely this is question-begging.

Another of Stead's arguments against patristic notions of divine simplicity is a disjunction that is meant to show that simplicity is incompatible with the claims of Christian faith. While I reject this view, I agree with part of his analysis, so far as it goes. His basic claim is that a theologian can take one of two options: either (A) divine simplicity entails that God—or, in the technical language of the day, the divine substance or essence—is identical with each of God's attributes, or (B) the same doctrine entails that God is outside of all categories and therefore beyond all attributes. These options should be familiar enough by now: they are the identity thesis and radical apophaticism, respectively. Stead argues that neither option is theologically acceptable. While his arguments are not without problems, he has undoubtedly put his finger on the pressures the doctrine of simplicity places on theological epistemology. Moreover, the two versions of divine simplicity he opposes correspond to the versions I am arguing that the Cappadocians reject.

If one takes option (A), Stead argues, then one has a difficult time reconciling this belief with belief in what he calls "particular providence"[19] and "prevenient grace".[20] You must deny the former because you cannot say God is identical with his action of, say, raising you to eternal bliss *and* with his action of damning your office mate to hellfire. And if one continues to maintain the identity thesis, arguing that these are the same actions from a general point of view, then one must deny God's prevenient grace. This is because if the difference between God's saving you and damning you-know-who is not a difference on God's part, then it is presumably a difference that you and so-and-so are responsible for, thereby placing the initiative for salvation and moral progress in human hands. But if one takes option (B), and develops a radically negative theology, then one

[18] Stead rightly points to Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 28.7 at 'Divine Simplicity as a Problem', 256.

[19] 'Divine Simplicity as a Problem', 262.

[20] *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, 131.

has to relativize or deny the myriad positive titles given to God in scripture.

One might ask whether (A) and (B) necessarily have these consequences. Surely, one must at least say that the account of divine activities which Stead assumes, according to which God acts one way now, another way then, is anthropomorphism of the finest sort. Yet, even if we grant this account for the sake of argument, other problems remain. For instance, Eunomius of Cyzicus, whom we examine in Chapter 4, holds (A), but would not agree with Stead's portrayal of the consequences of the identity thesis. For Eunomius, from the fact that God's attributes (or, really, attribute) are identical it does not follow that God's activities are identical. However, Eunomius' claim depends crucially on his distinction between essence (*οὐσία*) and activities (*ἐνεργείαι*), a distinction that is difficult to maintain in as sharp a manner as he tries to do.[21] If we are not prepared to accept such a distinction, does it follow that Stead is right about (A)? Not necessarily. Another way to make (A) work is to appeal to the fact that a single action can be rightly described in multiple ways, even when performed by a human being. In their well-known defence of divine simplicity, Stump and Kretzmann offer as an example the single activity of flipping a switch on a wall that could be accurately described as "turning on the light, walking the dog, frightening the prowler, etc".[22]

This may turn out to be the correct response to Stead, but there are problems. In the case of the person turning on the light, we have reasons to believe that this action is identical with the action of frightening the prowler (these being merely descriptions of the effects or context of a single action whose singleness is empirically ascertainable). But even if we grant this, we seem to have no reason to believe that God's action of talking to Cain at time t_1 and God's action of producing a hailstorm in Egypt at t_2, to use Stump and Kretzmann's examples of divine activities in scripture, constitute the same action *other than on the theory under review*. To be sure, they offered the 'turning on the light' example only in order to show that it is not

[21] See, e.g., *Apol.* 22.

[22] Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, 'Absolute Simplicity', 356.

unreasonable to believe that there can be multiple descriptions of a single act; they do not view this as a 'proof' of the unity of divine action. But what would we check in order to confirm whether God's talking to Cain and his sending the hail are in fact the same? The problem with Stump and Kretzmann's view is not simply that we have to presuppose divine simplicity in order to arrive at the identity of these actions, but that we have to hold a rather idiosyncratic version of divine simplicity. This is one that Eunomius, as we have seen, does not accept. And neither would the Cappadocians or Clement of Alexandria. So why should we believe that divine simplicity implies the identity of apparently distinct divine actions?[23]

The important point is that, although there are ways of responding to Stead's criticism of the identity thesis, these are unsatisfactory unless we are firmly committed to it on quite independent grounds and willing to countenance some possibly unacceptable consequences. One must either sever completely God's activities from God's simple essence (as in Eunomius) or appeal to an utterly mysterious unity, a theoretical entity for which we have no reasons other than the theory we are defending (as in Stump and Kretzmann). If we accept the identity thesis, we need to abandon or redescribe what Stead calls "particular providence" and "prevenient grace".

As for (B), the view that divine simplicity entails a thoroughly negative theology, Stead is right that this is incompatible with positive, scriptural descriptions of God, but then again this is the purpose of the theory and so the objection scores at best a glancing blow. Clement of Alexandria, the representative of (B) whom we will study in Chapter 2, is at least consistent: he maintains that even though we use terms like 'good' for God, these concepts are merely placeholders, useful for keeping our minds focused, but without referential efficacy. We must await that chapter to see how this is compatible with a positive theology, indeed with the view of theology as a *science*, which Clement endorses. For now it certainly appears that the possibility of this positive science will be in spite of rather than because of divine simplicity.

[23] Gregory of Nyssa ridicules the identity thesis on precisely the grounds that it would make God's action of creating identical with his essence, which he assumes is absurd to his opponents as well as himself: *Eun.* 2.31–3 (GNO 1: 236–7).

We are left, then, with a bleak picture. Stead seems to be right in his view that either of the two clearest versions of simplicity leaves us with no ability to make the claims that Christians wish to make about God. I largely accept his analysis so far, but it is flawed in that it reduces the options to two, when in fact the Cappadocians (here, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa) offer a different version of simplicity that escapes the problem, as stated by Stead, of being incompatible with ordinary religious discourse. The Cappadocians attempt to 'save the appearances' of religious language, especially its multiplicity and complexity, without evacuating simplicity of its content. Stead noted this attempt, but found it lacking: "the Cappadocians most opportunely, though unexpectedly, insist that the simplicity of the Godhead does not preclude a multiplicity of descriptions, *epinoiai.* These, however, were thought to relate to the energies and relationships of the Godhead, leaving his simple substance unaffected; a position which I have given reason to reject."[24] By analysing the role of *epinoia* or 'conceptualization' in relation to Basil's broader theological epistemology, I will suggest that Stead's negative assessment rests upon a misunderstanding of the logical foundations of the 'Cappadocian' position. He makes the same mistake that many interpreters do: assuming that, for Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, *all* theological language is based on conceptualization (*epinoia*). To be sure, terms humans devise through *epinoia* only "relate to the energies and relationships of the Godhead"—if by this we mean that they either name 'relative' properties (properties we apply to God only when we place our ideas of God in relation to something), such as God's not having a beginning or 'ingeneracy', or are derived from reflection upon God's activities, such as his calling Israel out of slavery. But such terms form only one class of theological concepts. Despite their agnosticism about defining what it is to be God, Basil and Gregory do predicate a number of terms of the divine substance. These terms refer to God's intrinsic properties, goodness, light, life, power, wisdom, and so forth. These properties, I will argue, must be understood differently from ideas and terms derived through conceptualization. They are not *identical* with God's nature, but neither are they merely

[24] 'Divine Simplicity as a Problem', 267.

relative, extrinsic properties. Rather, they are propria of the divine nature.[25] Herein lies the uniqueness of Basil and Gregory's account of divine simplicity.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

In order to highlight the distinctive features of Basil and Gregory, it is necessary to outline the options they faced. Chapter 1 focuses on the problem of contradiction among divine attributes and activities. Here, I situate Ptolemy's discussion of whether the activities attributed to God in scripture are contradictory within both second-century anti-Marcionite polemic and second-century Platonism. It is important to bear this discussion in mind when reading Basil and Gregory, for a crucial part of their response to Eunomius is to deny that there is any contradiction, indeed any difference at all, between the activities of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

The bulk of Chapter 2 turns to the negative theology of Clement. I first outline what Clement thinks it means to know something (in the strong sense of scientific knowledge) and then show how this breaks down in the case of God. I highlight Clement's indebtedness to a wide range of epistemological theories, and his use of the theological interpretation developing among Platonists at this time of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides*. Chapter 2 also spells out the way in which Origen picks up these themes, developing his doctrine of *epinoiai*, which Basil adapts by severing its connection with the distinction between a simple first principle, the 'Father', and a complex second principle, the 'Son'.

Chapter 3 provides background for Aetius' and Eunomius' theological epistemology. The first part discusses the history of the term 'ingenerate', as used by Christians from the second century onwards. This provides context for Aetius' and Eunomius' claim that this term uniquely names the divine essence. The second part examines Athanasius of Alexandria's argument concerning what divine simplicity

[25] I explain the concept and terminology of propria in the section labelled Note to the Reader.

implies for predicating terms of God. Athanasius argues that, if God is simple, such terms can only name the divine essence. This argument is isomorphic with that of Aetius and Eunomius on the same topic. It represents a crucial step in the construction of the identity thesis.

Chapter 4 turns directly to Aetius and Eunomius. Here I argue that the identity thesis fulfils not only what they take to be required for God to be simple, but also what is required for God to be *knowable*. Drawing on the work of Aetius, Eunomius extends it, making it an *epistemological* argument. He adopts the principle of the epistemological priority of definition, modifying it in such a way that it entails a stark alternative between knowing God's essence perfectly or not knowing God *at all*. Eunomius believes that he does know the essence of God, and that the content of this knowledge can be summarized with the single term 'ingenerate' (ἀγέννητος). Since God is simple, God is identical with God's ingeneracy. Neither Aetius nor Eunomius denies that Christians have a range of terms to use of God in addition to ingeneracy. However, Eunomius argues that each of these is synonymous with 'ingeneracy'. That is, identity in reference entails identity in sense. This lack of a clear distinction between the sense or meaning of theological terms and what they refer to or denote handicaps Eunomius' version of the identity thesis and helps make Basil and Gregory's response, with their emphasis on the non-synonymous nature of theological terms, attractive. It is often (rightly) asserted in modern philosophical discussions that the sense/reference distinction is necessary to an adequate version of the identity thesis: this allows us to say, for instance, that God's justice and God's mercy are identical without saying that justice and mercy mean the same thing.[26] In this sense, it is Basil and Gregory, rather than Eunomius, who are the allies of the identity thesis, since they provide grounds for believing that distinctions between concepts we have of God do not necessarily map onto real distinctions in God. It is an interesting question, but one outside the scope of this study, whether the more sophisticated version of the identity thesis can be made compatible with Basil and Gregory's theology, or

[26] See Stump and Kretzmann, 'Absolute Simplicity', 356–7; James Ross, 'Comments on "Absolute Simplicity"', *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (1985): 383–91 at 383–4.

whether, like Eunomius' version, it claims to provide more knowledge of the divine essence than is possible—whether these theologians (to borrow a phrase from songwriter John Prine) fail because they try.

The final three chapters (5 to 7) detail the response of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. The purpose of the book, again, is to highlight the distinctiveness of their account of divine simplicity and theological epistemology. This is a key reason why I have not extended my account to include the other so-called 'Cappadocian' theologian, Gregory of Nazianzus. There are undeniable connections among the three Cappadocians. But part of what I want to claim is that Gregory of Nyssa's theology is best read first of all as a defence of Basil. The same cannot be said with as great a specificity of Gregory Nazianzen: though he opposed Eunomius, he did not write a *Contra Eunomium* to defend Basil. Including a discussion of his (admittedly theologically rich) account of simplicity and the knowledge of God would take us too far afield from the peculiarities of Basil's position, which deserves more attention than it has received.[27]

I begin in Chapter 5 with what we might call Basil's negative doctrine of simplicity: that is, his doctrine of what simplicity does *not* imply. Significantly, it does not imply that language used of God is predicated of the divine essence. For Eunomius, a theological claim either names the divine essence or is fictitious; Basil denies this. Basil draws a number of distinctions among theological terms, each of which resists the reduction of theological language to claims about God's essence. Chapter 6 has two parts. The first continues the examination of Basil's negative doctrine of simplicity with a discussion of his famous account of 'conceptualization' (*ἐπίνοια*). This account constitutes a firm rebuttal of two key Eunomian theses: (1) that, since true names name essences, difference in names signals difference in essences; and (2) that 'ingenerate' is a good candidate for an essential name of God. For Basil, it is merely a term humans have devised by reflecting on more basic concepts of God, a product of conceptualization and not a realist portrait of God. The second

[27] Fortunately, there is now an excellent study of Nazianzen by Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

part of Chapter 6 turns to Basil's account of the terms that do in some sense name the divine substance, that contribute to the 'formula of essence' (*λόγος της οὐσίας*) which the Father and Son share. These terms (e.g. light, life, power, goodness) receive extensive treatment in Gregory of Nyssa, to whom I turn in Chapter 7. Gregory defends and clarifies Basil's negative doctrine of simplicity, including the defence of conceptualization. But Gregory expands on Basil by developing an account of the 'goods', that is, God's power, wisdom, life, goodness, and so forth, according to which these attributes are inter-entailing in the way the virtues reciprocally entail one another. This means that God's justice and wisdom, for instance, necessarily go together. This reciprocity or inter-entailment of the divine goods is important: it implies that God is so far from having just one essential attribute that, precisely because God is simple and unmixed with his opposite, God necessarily has multiple attributes. For Gregory (and, it seems, Basil before him), the goods are inherent in the divine nature without being identical with it. They are propria of that nature.

One might ask how much it helps, in responding to radical apophaticism and the identity thesis, to appeal to the notion of propria in explicating the relation of essential divine attributes to the divine nature. I suggest that this move is laudable not only as a subtle and unique response to late ancient debates, but also because of its implications for the broader problem of the knowledge of God. Basil and Gregory's account of this has what I take to be the virtue of simultaneously affirming the absolute reliability of human knowledge of God (since knowledge of propria is not 'partial' in the sense of knowing a 'part') and the necessary limitation of that knowledge (since knowing propria is different from knowing essential definitions). This account transformed theological epistemology to such an extent that even subsequent proponents of the identity thesis maintain a similar dialectic of knowing and unknowing.

We began with Basil's approval of what might appear to us as tedious, even obsessive concern with theological language. For Basil, this concern reflects an appropriate response to Jesus' admonition to seek in the hopes of finding. We can now add that, with their account of the simultaneous reliability and incompleteness of theological language, Basil and Gregory can explain why seeking will lead to

finding. The relation between finding and seeking in theology is utterly non-instrumental. Where true goodness is the object of our search, Gregory says, "to find it is to seek it for ever. For it is not one thing to seek, and another to find, but the reward of seeking is the actual seeking."[28] Without the reliability of theological language, the seeking would not be finding; without its incompleteness, the finding would not be seeking. As it is, they are identical. The doctrine of the perpetual progress into God for which Gregory's eschatology has become famous in modern scholarship is not so much a quaint addition to his thought as a necessary corollary of his and Basil's understanding of the nature of human knowledge of God.

[28] *Hom. 7 in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 400.21–401.2; trans. Stuart George Hall, *Gregory of Nyssa: Homilies on Ecclesiastes* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 118).

1

Simplicity and the Problem of Contradiction: Ptolemy and the Legacy of Marcion

It is a commonplace of modern Christian thought that calling God simple is impossible for Christians, given the scriptural portrayal of God as active. How could an entirely simple being act in the ways described, or indeed at all? Christopher Stead raised this objection, as discussed in the Introduction; one could multiply examples. Take Karl Barth's claim that in traditional scholastic theology simplicity was "exalted to the all-controlling principle, the idol . . . devouring everything concrete".[1] The objection has obvious theological weight. And yet, this chapter will suggest that it represents a case of question-begging. It assumes that we have a stable reference for 'God' when we say 'in scripture, God acts thus'. But the referent of 'God' is just the question; at least it is the question *patristic* exegetes asked.

Early Christian debates, from the second century through at least the fourth century, often turned on questions that might seem unnecessary to us: 'in this scriptural text, who is speaking?' 'Who is being spoken of?' A significant part of the task in a doctrinal dispute is establishing the reference of scriptural passages, or the speaker of a line in scripture. Marcion of Sinope famously argued that the texts about divine action in the Old Testament must have a different

[1] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1 (New York: Scribner's, 1957), 329, cited in Christopher A. Franks, 'The Simplicity of the Living God: Aquinas, Barth, and Some Philosophers', *Modern Theology* 21.2 (2005): 275–300.

referent from those of Paul's letters and portions of Luke's Gospel.[2] To be sure, as Rowan Williams has noted, in the wake of Origen's endeavours, fourth-century patristic exegetes were more concerned than their predecessors with interpreting *specific* passages and solving problems they raised, as opposed to general questions of the canonical status of texts.[3] But in a broad sense, we can nonetheless say that Marcion, in dividing up referents for biblical texts, was doing nothing terribly different from a stalwart of fourth-century Nicene orthodoxy such as Athanasius, who argued that the Wisdom who spoke in Proverbs 8:22 ("The Lord created me as the beginning of his work") is the human Christ, not the Word. Indeed, such an exegetical practice, fundamental as it was to the development of the doctrine of God, would have seemed commonsensical to someone trained to read texts by a grammarian (*grammaticus*).[4] For one of the first tasks in reading any text was to establish who was speaking or being spoken about.

But what criteria were used for assigning passages to one subject as opposed to another? In this chapter, I argue that, from as early as the controversies surrounding Marcion, simplicity entered into the criteria for making such judgements. It did so along with other assumptions about God: that God is one or good or just, for instance. Additionally, basic logical rules, such as the law of non-contradiction, were operative, such that if one assumes God to be F, and this passage attributes to God something that contradicts God's-being-F, then one must describe this passage as having a different subject. So, we have in these arguments a complex of three kinds of judgements about God: first, exegetically grounded attributes, such as goodness, justice, and mercy; second, principles, such as divine simplicity, that are not in scripture but which help one make sense of what is in scripture; and, finally, basic logical principles, such as the law of non-contradiction.

[2] Though see now Joseph B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006). Tyson argues that the canonical form of Acts was written in response to Marcion in the second century.

[3] Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, rev. edn. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 148.

[4] See Ayres, *Nicaea*, 35.

We can perhaps pull these three elements apart and analyse each separately. But what I want to suggest is that, from very early on, the functions of calling God simple and of saying that one should not attribute contradictory statements to (the same) God got mapped onto one another; that is, simplicity became a logical or grammatical rule. What I mean by 'functions' can be clarified further. When one makes a judgement of the first kind, saying 'God is good', there may be no further point she is trying to make. This kind of statement may have a function beyond itself (for instance, it may be said in order to praise or to exhort, convert, or remind); but it need not have any point other than saying what 'God' means. In contrast, saying 'God is simple' and saying 'God's attributes are not contradictory' do have functions beyond themselves. In fact, the second really means, 'do not attribute contradictory statements to God'. Similarly, the first means, in the most obvious sense, 'do not attribute parts to God'. So, both of these claims regulate other claims. If I refer to 'God's simple power', I do not mean that God has two things, simplicity and power, but that 'power' should not be understood as a part of God.

Simplicity and non-contradiction, then, are both rules for speaking about God. But the similarity between the two goes further. Perhaps the easiest way to illustrate this similarity is to note that ancient authors starting with Aristotle often called the (four) elements 'simple'. Fire, air, earth, and water are, for Aristotle, 'simple bodies'. Christopher Stead has suggested that this should cause no small embarrassment for Christians who use the language of simplicity for God.[5] One can see the force of the objection, given the materiality of the elements and the immateriality of God. Still, one must not overlook a significant reason why 'simplicity' works in both cases. Ancient authors called fire simple in part because fire has a primary power, being hot, without which it cannot be fire. If there is fire, there is heat; if there is heat, there is fire. To the extent that the contradictory state, not-being-hot, comes to be present, fire itself will be to that extent less present. In other words, to say fire is simple is to say that it has a certain power or attribute purely. Knowing that fire is hot (and purely hot), one knows not to ascribe the contradictory state to fire.

[5] 'Divine Simplicity as a Problem', 257–9.

So too with God: to say God is simple is to say that, where one reads in scripture of activities discordant with what one 'knows' of God, one must either reinterpret them in such a way that they are *not* contradictory with what one 'knows' or ascribe them to a different agent from God. This 'agent' could be called a second God or God's Word, Wisdom, or Son: such an entity was not necessarily held to violate monotheism in the late ancient world. What counted as monotheism was having a single *first* principle.[6]

Simplicity in the sense we are concerned with now is closely associated with uniformity and purity. It is true that there are other uses of the notion of simplicity: often, 'simple' merely glosses 'immaterial'. To be sure, the concern to avoid materialism in talking about God appears across a wide range of early Christian literature, from Irenaeus and Origen to Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine. Yet, I hope to show that, from the second to the fourth centuries, early Christians used the language of divine simplicity for a deeper, more fundamental purpose: to articulate the consistency—the non-contradictable nature, power, and activity—of God as revealed in scripture.

The following discussion tracks how concerns with contradiction entered Christian discourse in the debates surrounding Marcion. I focus on Ptolemy, whose *Letter to Flora* is a perhaps surprising example of how the doctrine of simplicity entered into broader exegetical and theological disputes. I argue that Ptolemy's concern with responding to Marcion leads him to appropriate the Platonist theology of Numenius, with its distinction of a first and second God, and that this division of first principles in Numenius and Ptolemy depends on an appeal to simplicity. Simplicity allows Ptolemy to fix the reference of biblical texts, to show which divine figure is involved in creating, giving the law, and saving humanity. Such actions, Ptolemy reasons, would be inconsistent with the Father's simplicity; yet, neither can they be ascribed to an adversarial figure, as they are for Marcion. Thus, Ptolemy is an example of how simplicity shaped early Christian exegesis, and not as an alien intrusion upon it, but as

[6] On this, see Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede (eds.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), especially the editors' introduction and the essays by Frede and John Dillon.

part of how Christians articulated the referent of biblical passages without falling into the trap of speaking of a self-contradictory God. The same concern will underlie much of the debate over simplicity in the Eunomian controversy, with each side believing that the other has attributed *contradictory* properties to God and thereby undermined the non-negotiable belief that God is purely and simply what he is, with no admixture of what is opposite or contradictory to this. Eunomius and the Cappadocians differ on precisely 'what he is' (and how we come to *know* this); they do not differ on how to say what is wrong with the opponent's position. This is because both sides are heirs to a long-standing Christian tradition of using the language of simplicity to articulate the consistency of God—or, better, the *necessary* consistency of God. Of course, the contexts within which Ptolemy, Eunomius, and the Cappadocians worked were very different, and they surely would have recognized fatal deficiencies in each other's doctrinal positions. Basil and Gregory would never allow the division of divine reality between an intermediate Creator and a non-creating Father as Ptolemy has it. Yet, without denying the obvious discontinuities, when we attend to how they use the principle of non-contradiction and the language of simplicity, we can perhaps glimpse something of the "continuity of fundamental aims" that justifies us in reading them as participants in a common, coherent tradition.[7]

PERCEPTIONS OF MARCION

Like many figures who have fallen by the wayside of 'orthodoxy', we know more about what Marcion's opponents found objectionable in his theology than we do about his own work.[8] This is in one sense regrettable, given the appeal Marcionite communities continued to have for centuries after his death. Yet, in another sense, to know

[7] Maurice Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study in the Principles of Early Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 172.

[8] A helpful survey of the status of 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' in Marcion's context can be found in Einar Thomassen, 'Orthodoxy and Heresy in second-century Rome', *Harvard Theological Review* 97 (2004): 241–56.

what authors found problematic in Marcion's teaching is to know something important about the contours of the emerging Christian doctrine of God.[9]

In the second century, one can see two kinds of reaction to Marcion. On one side are those like Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian who believe that Marcion's most grievous error is undermining the numerical unity or uniqueness of God by positing a 'God beyond God', an 'alien' God above the creator. On the other side is Ptolemy, who has no problem with speaking of a first and second God—as, indeed, Justin has no problem doing in other contexts—but nonetheless finds Marcion's division of first principles problematic. Both sides agree that Marcion has misunderstood the attributes of God as portrayed in scripture.

Justin's brief extant comments about Marcion align him with Irenaeus and Tertullian. It is likely that they learned about Marcion at least in part from Justin's longer, not extant heresiological works. Irenaeus and Tertullian take Marcion to be reasoning from the assumption that God—the true, 'alien' God—has but one attribute, goodness. It is unclear whether this is an entirely accurate description of Marcion's theology or, if so, whether, for Marcion, the notion that God has only one attribute is based on an appeal to divine simplicity. What is clear is that it is objectionable to Irenaeus and Tertullian.

Given their concern to argue that it is the *same* God who acts throughout Christian scripture, it is not hard to see why Irenaeus and Tertullian would find such a notion problematic. There are certainly many passages which, when read literally, portray God as acting with something other than the gratuitous goodness Marcion finds in his canon. One will be tempted to ascribe these to a different agent, if one assumes that such goodness is all one can say about God.

9 A helpful review of reactions to Marcion can be found in Winrich Löhr, 'Did Marcion Distinguish between a Just God and a Good God?', in Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat (eds.), *Marcion und seine kirchengeschictliche Wirkung*, Vorträge der Internationalen Fachkonferenz zu Marcion, 15.–18. August 2001 in Mainz (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 131–46; Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts*, ch. 2, also treats reactions to Marcion extensively. Neither piece considers Ptolemy, though Löhr does do so in 'La Doctrine de Dieu dans la Lettre à Flora de Ptolémée', *RHPR* 75 (1995): 177–91.

But how should one respond without mere gainsaying or counter-assertion? Two of Irenaeus' and Tertullian's strategies deserve mention. First, Irenaeus and Tertullian argue that the goodness Marcion envisions is not really such. Irenaeus asks:

> How can he be good who draws away men that do not belong to him from him who made them, and calls them into his own kingdom? And why is his goodness, which does not save all [thus], defective? Also, why does he, indeed, seem to be good as respects men, but most unjust with regard to him who made men, inasmuch as he deprives him of his possessions?[10]

Irenaeus also reasons that something is wrong with calling the 'alien' God 'good' for forgiving us when we had disobeyed a *different* God's commands.[11] Tertullian similarly argues that if one separates goodness from justice and rationality, it is no longer really good.[12] This hints at the 'unity of the virtues' notion that Gregory of Nyssa will develop; but there is no developed argument in Tertullian, as there is in Gregory, that God's various attributes *necessarily* imply one another, let alone an inference to this reciprocal implication from divine simplicity, a doctrine Tertullian seems not to accept.

A second strategy, which Tertullian in particular develops, is to say that there are other, more basic claims one makes about God, which shape what one means when one says that God is 'good'. Tertullian argues that "if God is not one only, he does not exist".[13] Unity is thus a necessary mark of divinity. So too is "supreme greatness" (*summum magnum*).[14] Tertullian argues that there are certain attributes of God that are indisputable. When controversy arises over a disputable attribute, like goodness, one should check how it is used against those attributes that one cannot reasonably question. For instance, if one appeals to divine goodness in order to prove that there are two Gods, then one should check this claim against the more basic notions like

[10] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.33.2 (SC 100; trans. in ANF 1, p. 507).

[11] Ibid. 5.17.1.

[12] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* (*AM*) 1.22–4; cf. Löhr, 'Did Marcion Distinguish?', 137–40. Löhr suggests that Tertullian invents the interpretation of Marcion as making a distinction between a just God and a good God.

[13] Tertullian, *AM* 1.3.1. Ed. and trans. Ernest Evans, *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 8–9: *Deus si non unus est, non est.*

[14] Ibid. 1.3.2ff. See René Braun, *Deus Christianorum: Recherches sur le vocabulaire doctrinal de Tertullien* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1977), 42–4.

divine unity and the fact that God is supreme greatness. Since both of these rule out plurality, the appeal to goodness must be false. One of the basic notions we have of God is ingeneracy; Marcion's two Gods will both then, *qua* Gods, be "ingenerate" (*innati*), which Tertullian finds absurd. Indeed, along with eternity and uncreatedness, he calls being ingenerate God's "primary character" (*status principalis*).[15] In Chapter 3, we will see that such a position was not uncommon even before Eunomius made ingeneracy God's defining attribute.

Irenaeus and Tertullian argue that Marcion has mistaken the first God: Marcion's 'alien' God cannot be as Marcion describes him. In contrast, for Ptolemy, Marcion's gravest error is mistaking the moral status of the mediating second principle, or perhaps of overlooking the need for the second principle altogether.[16] Ptolemy agrees with Marcion that divine activity in scripture cannot be attributed directly to the good God. But he takes his unnamed opponent, whom we can identify with Marcion or perhaps some of his followers, to imply that the second principle, who is active in scripture as creator and judge, is evil, whereas Ptolemy argues that he is just.

Recent scholarship on Ptolemy's *Letter to Flora* has suggested that it would be best to read this document on its own, and not through the lens of Irenaeus' reports of what certain "followers of Ptolemy" (*qui sunt circa Ptolemaeum*, οἱ περὶ Πτολεμαῖον) said.[17]

[15] Tertullian, *AM* 1.3.1. Ed. and trans. 1.9.9; Evans, 24–5; cf. ibid. 1.3.2 and René Braun, *Deus Christianorum*, 46–51. As Braun argues, these terms are synonyms that express the aseity of God.

[16] This places Ptolemy close to the reported teaching of Prepon, a Syriac disciple of Marcion, who distinguished an intermediate principle as a third between the good and evil principles. The views of Prepon are reported by Hippolytus at *Ref.* VII.31; cf. *Ref.* X.19; Eusebius, *h.e.* V.3; and for discussion Löhr, 'Did Marcion Distinguish?', 142–3.

[17] Christoph Markschies, 'New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus', *ZAC* 4 (2000): 225–54; cf. Einar Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the 'Valentinians'* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 17–20, 119–29. However, one should note (as Markschies himself does in 'New Research', 251 n. 106) that phrases of this sort (οἱ περὶ τὸν δεῖνα) sometimes denoted an individual himself or the individual as head of a school and not simply the followers of the individual, as Markschies assumes: see Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 248–9 n. 22 (Barnes suggests rendering οἱ περὶ Εὐσέβιον as "Eusebius and his followers"). Still, Markschies's observation casts doubt on attributing all of Irenaeus' report to Ptolemy himself. There is perhaps a reference to Ptolemy himself at

When we bracket off the elaborate mythology Irenaeus reports from our interpretation of the *Letter*, the document becomes more coherent and more obviously connected with broader currents in second-century thought, both Christian reactions to Marcion and Platonist theology.[18]

As a whole, the letter seeks to introduce Flora[19] to the proper way of interpreting "the Law laid down through Moses".[20] Ptolemy steers her between two positions, each of which he attributes to actual parties:

> Some say that the Law has been legislated by the God and Father, while others, turning towards the path opposite to these, obstinately maintain that it has been laid down by the devil, the corrupting adversary, as they also attribute the fashioning of the world to him, when they say that he is Father and Creator of this universe.[21]

Ptolemy does not specify who the groups or individuals are who held these positions, and there has been scholarly controversy as to their identity. Most problematic is the identity of the first group: are these

Irenaeus, *AH* 1.8.5. However, Markschies notes ('New Research', 249ff.) that the reference there is only in the Latin version. He views it as "a late remark written by a redactor of the Latin version of Irenaeus' text" (ibid., 250). This seems justified on the grounds that Epiphanius of Salamis, whose late-fourth-century *Panarion* preserves Ptolemy's letter, in citing the material from *AH* 1.8, does not attribute it to Ptolemy. He rather makes it part of his report on Valentinus (*Panarion* 31.9–32.9). Unfortunately, Markschies notes, modern editors of the *AH* have retro-translated the Latin phrase *et Ptolemaeus quidem ita* into their Greek versions as <*Καὶ ὁ μὲν Πτολεμαῖος οὕτως*>. Erasmus must have had access to mss that the SC editors of *AH* (Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, SJ) did not, since his 1526 editio princeps is the only witness they print for the Latin phrase identifying Ptolemy as the author of the material in *AH* 1.8.

[18] I use Quispel's edition: Gilles Quispel (ed.), *Ptolémée: Lettre à Flora*. 2nd edn. SC 24 (Paris: Cerf, 1966). One should consult the critical remarks on Quispel's edition, translation, and commentary by Löhr, 'La Doctrine', 180–4.

[19] There has been some debate over Flora's identity. R. M. Grant argued that this was a code name for the Christian church in Rome. 'Notes on Gnosis', *VC* 11 (1957): 145–51. This thesis has not met with scholarly approval. G. Lüdemann, 'Zur Geschicte des ältesten Christentums in Rom. I. Valentin und Marcion II. Ptolemäus und Justin', *ZNW* 70 (1979): 86–114, at 106; Markschies, 'New Research', 228 and n. 17.

[20] *Ep.* 3.1=Epiphanius, *Panarion* 33.3.1.

[21] *Ep.* 3.2.

Jews or a non-Jewish Christian group?[22] While the position of the second group may not correspond exactly to other reports of Marcion's teaching, it is clear that Ptolemy has a Marcionite position in mind.[23] Still, as Christoph Markschies has counselled, one should bear in mind that "Ptolemy certainly simplifies both positions for didactic reasons. He gives an ideal-type reconstruction of two positions which both were, from his point of view, equally absurd."[24] So, just like Irenaeus and Tertullian, we must take Ptolemy's perception of Marcion with a grain of salt.[25] Nonetheless, once again, his perception of the problem and his proposed remedy are worthy of attention in their own right as evidence for second-century accounts of God.

The underlying premise of Ptolemy's theology of the Law is that nothing produces a cause dissimilar to itself. God the Father is perfect, but the Law is "imperfect and needs to be fulfilled by another". Moreover, it contains commandments that are "discordant with the nature and purpose of such a God".[26] Yet, the Law opposes injustice. Hence, one cannot say it comes from the adversary (i.e. the devil), whose nature is injustice.

As the quotation above from *ep.* 3.2 makes clear, the debate was not simply over the giving of the Law, but also the creation of the world. There, Ptolemy attributes to one group of opponents the view that the Father is the creator. In 3.6, he argues that the devil cannot be the creator. Even the bodily eye, he argues, can see the effects of divine providence in the world—effects that cannot stem from an evil God. His argument relies on John 1:3:

[22] Harnack thought that Ptolemy had a Jewish position in mind. Quispel countered (citing no evidence) that it was "Les catholiques, et non les juifs", who held that the Father gave the Law (SC 24: 76). Quispel's designation may assume a clearer demarcation between 'Catholics' and non-Catholics than actually existed in the mid-second century.

[23] Cf. Markschies, 'New Research', 234 n. 40; Quispel, SC 24: 76.

[24] 'New Research', 234.

[25] R. Joseph Hoffman questions the extent to which Irenaeus' and Tertullian's reports of Marcion's teaching rest on actual engagement with his work, but does not examine Ptolemy as a witness to Marcion. *Marcion: On the Restitution of Christianity: An Essay on the Development of Radical Paulinist Theology in the Second Century.* AAR Academy Series 46 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 190–1.

[26] *Ep.* 3.4; cf. 5.5.

Moreover, the Apostle, who has denied in advance the insubstantial 'wisdom' of those who speak falsely, says that all things have come to be through him and that without him nothing has come to be and that the creation of the world is proper, not to a corrupting God, but to a just God who hates evil . . .[27]

Here, Ptolemy states what he takes to be the moral or qualitative nature of the creator-God, identifying him with the *λόγος* of the prologue to John's Gospel. Ptolemy seems further to identify the *λόγος* with the figure he calls the Saviour, who in the *Letter* is clearly Jesus Christ of (our) orthodox canonical Gospels. Both are distinguished by their justice. Thus, Ptolemy makes a very non-'Gnostic' identification of the agents of creation, legislation, and redemption: all of these are activities of the Saviour or intermediary. Yet, for Ptolemy, the activities and words of the Saviour also point beyond themselves, somehow revealing the Father who is not directly involved in the acts of creating or revealing.[28]

On the basis of the "Saviour's" (i.e. Jesus') words as well as some passages in Paul, Ptolemy argues that the Law contains a threefold division. First, there is that part which is "unmixed with evil and injustice" and "pure" yet "imperfect" in that it needs to be fulfilled by the Saviour.[29] This part corresponds to the Decalogue. This is the Law "properly speaking" (*κυρίως*), which seems to mean that of all the OT legislation, only this part comes directly from God (i.e. the second God). The Saviour fulfilled, rather than abolished, this part

[27] SC 24:52, emended: *Ἔτι τε τὴν τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργίαν ἰδίαν λέγει εἶναι τά τε πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ γεγονέναι οὐδὲν ὁ ἀπόστολος, προαποστερήσας τὴν τῶν ψευδηγορούντων ἀνυπόστατον σοφίαν, καὶ οὐ φθοροποιοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ δικαίου καὶ μισοπονήρου* . . . .There is a debate about the text here. Holl conjectured an *αὐτοῦ* before *ἰδίαν*, which Quispel follows. The referent of the pronoun would be *ὁ σωτήρ* at the end of the previous sentence (3.5). I follow Löhr ('La doctrine', 181) and Markschies ('New Research', 240 n. 65) in viewing this emendation as unnecessary. Though the word order is odd, the genitives that go with *ἰδίαν* are *φθοροποιοῦ θεοῦ* . . . *δικαίου* . . . *μισοπονήρου*. If one removes Holl's conjecture, then all that Ptolemy has proven is what the *δημιουργός* must be like to produce this world: he must be just and hate evil (cf. *ep.* 7.2ff.) Hence, the devil cannot fill the bill. Ptolemy has not explicitly identified the *δημιουργός* with the *σωτήρ*. Yet, the argument of the *Letter* demands that the two be identified.

[28] Cf. *ep.* 3.7.

[29] *Ep.* 5.1, 3.

of the Law, where fulfilled means confirmed. Ptolemy infers from passages like Matthew 19:8 that some of the Law was written by Moses on account of the Israelites' hardness of heart. This second part of the Law corresponds to the *lex talionis*, and includes all commands that oppose injustice by further injustice. Thus, Moses allowed divorce (presumably an intrinsically unjust act in Ptolemy's view) as a lesser evil because of the marital problems of the Israelites. Similarly, the allowance of 'eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth' counsels retributive violence, which is formally identical to the original violence to which it responds. The Saviour expressly rejected these allowances of minimal injustice to counter a greater injustice. By extension, he rejected the entire second part of the Law. Since it was mixed with evil and injustice, it was discordant with the Saviour's very nature. Ptolemy speaks of the Saviour's words and the *lex talionis* as contraries, which are destructive of one another.[30] In the Saviour's teachings, justice destroyed the injustice inherent in the second part of the Law by rescinding it ("You have heard it said . . . but I say to you . . . "). Finally, the ritual aspects of the Law, including sacrifice and circumcision, become symbolic after the full revelation of the "truth".[31] Hence, Paul spoke of a circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29) and of Christ as our 'paschal lamb' (1 Cor. 5:7).

For Ptolemy, to reject the Old Testament outright rests on misunderstanding its core message: the revelation of a Creator and Legislator who is none other than the Saviour, the just mediator between God and the world. There are not just two principles one must take into account, let alone just one, as for Irenaeus and Tertullian. Rather, there are three: the Father, the mediator, and the adversary. Just as Irenaeus' and Tertullian's commitment to the unicity of God led them to reject Marcion, so too does Ptolemy's more elaborate theory of first principles drive his anti-Marcionite polemic. Ptolemy believes Marcion has mistaken the nature of the intermediary; it remains for him to fill in the sense in which the Saviour is a mediator.

[30] *Ep.* 6.2–3.
[31] *Ep.* 5.9.

PTOLEMY ON "SELF-SUBSISTENT LIGHT, SIMPLE AND UNIFORM"

Having set forth an exhaustive division of the parts of the Law, Ptolemy turns to the question of its author, or rather of the author of the Law "properly speaking".[32] Here he elaborates his threefold division of principles, God, the adversary, and the intermediary. Now, these principles do *not* correspond to the three parts of the Law. Ptolemy has already argued that neither (the first) God nor the adversary could have authored any portion of the Law. Rather, the second principle, the intermediary, is the author of the Law properly speaking.

In the section of the letter on the principles, Ptolemy does not argue for his interpretation of the natures of God and the adversary. He assumes these as given—though he does cite NT passages in support of his view that the Father is good and ingenerate. Rather, his express purpose is to determine "what sort of being this God is who laid down the Law".[33] What is of greatest interest for our purposes is his opposition between the *simplicity* of the Father and the doubleness (but *not* 'duplicity' in the sense of 'double-dealing' or 'deceiving') of the Lawgiver. The simplicity of the Father is part of what Ptolemy takes as given: he does not argue for it, but rather uses it to argue other points, most importantly to specify the distinction between the Father and the Saviour. We need to do a little detective work to see how he uses the notion of simplicity and where this use might have come from.

We will be in a better position to see what Ptolemy means by calling the Father simple if we clarify what he means by calling the mediator double.

[32] Strictly speaking, the second and third divisions are not parts of the Law (though cf. 5.7). This does not mean that Ptolemy holds that they are without value for Christians. The third division contains a wealth of symbols of Christ. And even though the second, which belongs to the 'old school of thought' (5.7: *τῃ παλαιᾳ αἱρέσει*), is no longer valid as Law, Ptolemy never indicates what sort of reading practice this implies for Christians. He may well hold it to be a necessary contrast for understanding the Saviour's teachings.

[33] *Ep.* 7.2.

For the substance of the adversary is corruption and darkness (for it is material and divided in many ways), and the substance of the ingenerate Father of the universe is incorruptibility and self-subsistent light, simple and uniform. But the substance of this one [i.e. the intermediary] produced a certain double power, and yet he is an image of the better one [i.e. the Father].[34]

The discussion of the Law in the previous section allows us to see that the mediator is not double in the sense of being morally conflicted, torn between justice and injustice.[35] Otherwise, the exegetical division Ptolemy makes would be nonsensical. Rather, the doubleness of the mediator and the simplicity of the Father amount to this: the Father has a characteristic status or activity from which he necessarily does not deviate, whereas the mediator (of course) *mediates* between this realm of pure light and the dark, material realm. The mediator's activities are, as it were, 'split' between reflecting the Father and operating as creator, lawgiver, and redeemer in the realm of matter.

Ptolemy says, not that the intermediary is double in himself, but that he "produced a certain double power". Many entities were

[34] *Ep.* 7.7 (SC 24: 70): *Τοῦ μὲν γὰρ ἀντικειμένου ἐστὶν ἡ οὐσία φθορά τε καὶ σκότος (ὑλικὸς γὰρ οὗτος καὶ πολυσχιδής), τοῦ δὲ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων τοῦ ἀγεννήτου ἡ οὐσία ἐστὶν ἀφθαρσία τε καὶ φῶς αὐτοόν, ἁπλοῦν τε καὶ μονοειδές· ἡ δὲ τούτου οὐσία διττὴν μὲν τινα δύναμιν προήγαγεν, αὐτὸς δὲ τοῦ κρείττονός ἐστιν εἰκών*. The *γάρ* signals the fact that this paragraph is meant to explain the claim at the end of 7.6 that the intermediary's substance is distinct from the Father's and the adversary's.

[35] Here I disagree with Löhr, 'La doctrine', 187: "il est probable que la remarque sur la puissance double de l'essence du demiurge veut signaler sa capacité à s'orienter vers le plus haut ou vers le plus bas, à devenir pire ou meilleur, à s'assimiler au premier Dieu lumineux ou au diable materiel et ténébreux." Ptolemy makes no indication of *moral* ambiguity in the intermediary. If Löhr were merely treating immateriality/simplicity/goodness on one hand and materiality/multiplicity/evil on the other as closely associated, his description would be less problematic. However, he seems to root the intermediary's doubleness in his justice itself: "la justice inférieure du demiurge est caractérisée par son activité de juge et législateur; c'est cette activité même qui l'implique dans une nécessité le mettant en contradiction avec lui-même" (ibid.). In my view, Löhr here is reading Ptolemy through the lens of either Tertullian's report of Marcion's teaching or later developments within the Marcionite school, which Löhr ably outlines in 'Did Marcion Distinguish?' It should be noted that Löhr generally views Ptolemy as espousing "un marcionitisme modéré par des touches platonistantes" ('La Doctrine', 188).

viewed as having 'double powers'.[36] Michel Barnes has indicated the importance in ancient philosophical and medical traditions of distinguishing between the primary and secondary powers of elements.[37] The similarity between Ptolemy's language and these traditions is striking, but I would suggest that we can be even more precise about his source. Ptolemy's use of διττός for the second God is one of a number of similarities between him and Numenius of Apamea. Winrich Löhr has pointed out a number of parallels between the two.[38] The evidence is strong enough to warrant the claim

[36] For example: the liver distinguishes what comes through it and converts food into blood (Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 1.218); the voice can speak and sing (ibid. 1.342); the line is both divisible and indivisible (Hero of Alexandria, *Definitions* 136.17); some cures benefit both *per se* and *per accidens* (Galen, *De methodo medendi*; Kühn ed., vol. 10, p. 708); some drugs both relieve pain and cure the condition (Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum*...; Kühn ed., vol. 11, p. 765); the rational faculty of the soul can concern itself with practical matters or eternal, necessary matters (Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De anima*; Bruns ed., CAG 2.1, p. 80); the controlling part of the soul mediates a double power, which is aimed both for the better, intelligible realm, and for the worse, sensible realm (Plotinus, *Ennead* 5.3.3.38); some planets have different powers by night from those they have by day (Aristides Quintilianus, *De musica* 3.21); fire illuminates and heats (Didymus the Blind, *In Genesim*, Codex p. 233). These examples are taken from a TLG search of texts from the fourth century BC to the fourth century AD for the items _διττ– and _δυναμ– within one line of each other. They are not exhaustive.

[37] Barnes, *Power of God*, 45.

[38] 'La doctrine', 186–88. Most strikingly: [1] the distinction between a second God who is ὁ δήμιουργος and a first God who is uninvolved in the act of creation; [2] the description of the second God as a lawgiver who implants seeds into the creation (Numenius fr. 13; Ptolemy 3.8; 7.10); [3] Numenius' description of the second-third God as oscillating between creating the material world and contemplating the intelligibles and the double power of Ptolemy's intermediary (Numenius frs. 11, 12); [4] the simplicity of the first God; [5] the use of image or imitation language to describe the relation of the first and second Gods. One major difference lies in how the two describe the qualitative status of the first and second Gods: Numenius' first God is αὐτοάγαθον and his second God is ἀγαθος (fr. 16), while Ptolemy's second God is "not good" (μήτε ἀγαθὸς: 7.5). There is also a strong disanalogy between the two in their respective uses of the term οὐσία: Numenius often uses οὐσία to mean "real being" as in the *Timaeus* (frs. 2, 6, 16), whereas Ptolemy appears to use it as a synonym for an entity's φύσις. Hence, for Ptolemy (7.7), even the adversary has an οὐσία. For Numenius, an entity belonging to the material world of becoming would at best image or reflect real being or οὐσία. Numenius does use οὐσία in the way Ptolemy uses it to describe the essence of something (fr. 50), but Ptolemy does not use the word in Numenius' Platonist sense of "real being", as opposed to "becoming". On fr. 50, see Barnes, *Power of God*, 102–3.

that Numenius influenced Ptolemy. The word διττός occurs in two fragments of Numenius, numbers 16 and 21, in different senses. The only relevant usage is in fragment 16, which Eusebius quotes in *Preparation for the Gospel* XI.22.3–5 from the fifth book of Numenius' *On the Good*: "For the second, himself being double, produces both his own Idea and the cosmos, first being Demiurge, then wholly contemplative."[39] Numenius has the second God produce the intelligible Idea that belongs to him, which he refers to as his οὐσία, that is the level or realm of true Being that belongs to the second God. There is an analogous, but higher, level that belongs to the first. But the second God's demiurgic activity has both an intelligible and a sensible product, for he also produces the cosmos. The doubleness lies in the fact that he is both demiurge and contemplator. Fragment 15 puts the contrast between the first and second Gods thus: "The first will be concerned with intelligibles, while the second will be concerned both with intelligibles and sensibles." This passage shows how Numenius' contrast of simplicity and doubleness cashes out in terms of divine activities. Both the first and second Gods are intelligences (fr. 17); only the second engages in "motion", involving himself in the material world, even to the point of being "divided" by matter (fr. 11). Some passages seem to describe the second's double activity as temporally sequential: first creating, then contemplating (frs. 11, 12, 16). Des Places has suggested that such temporal language should be taken non-literally: the second God would then simultaneously create and contemplate.[40] Similarly, Ptolemy's second principle both creates and images the Father.

We can further clarify the distinction between first and second Gods by contrasting doubleness with simplicity. Here again we see parallels with Numenius. Numenius' first God is simple, as is Ptolemy's. In itself, this would be unremarkable. Yet, a similar rationale underlies their accounts of what identifies the Father as simple. For

[39] Using, with permission, the draft translation of Steven K. Strange. My thanks to Prof. Strange for letting me use his very helpful translation and notes. Strange reads αὐτὸς ποιεῖ for Des Places' αὐτοποιεῖ.

[40] Des Places, *Numénius*, 56 n. 4. John Dillon has noted that this is based on the *Statesman* myth of cycles: *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 370–71.

Numenius, "the first God is free from every task".[41] The point is not that the first God does not do anything, but that he does not do anything that requires any other being; he does not turn *ad extra*. Fragment 11 shows that this is a function of the first God's simplicity: "The first God is in himself and simple, and since he is wholly present to himself, is in no way divisible." The first God's being "wholly present to himself" (*ἑαυτῷ συγγιγνόμενος διόλου*) here is clearly contrasted with the second God, who is not turned (exclusively) to the intelligible realm. Rather, the second God turns towards matter and is divided—so that, although he is (numerically) "one", he becomes in fact the "second-and-third God". The second God's turn towards matter, ordering it into a cosmos, strongly distinguishes him from the wholly contemplative first God.[42] It seems, then, that for Numenius, simplicity is a matter of activity: the singular activity of the first God, which is never "divided" by matter as is the demiurgic activity of the second, is entailed by his simplicity.

Ptolemy too argues that the act of creating the cosmos is discordant with the nature of the first God. Like Numenius' first God, Ptolemy's simple Father is uninvolved with materiality. Acting causally upon matter requires a double power, and hence a non-simple entity, which is complex at least at the level of power, if not of substance. The act of creating a sensible world is incompatible with a simple God for Ptolemy. For both Numenius and Ptolemy, simplicity is part of what picks out the truest, highest divinity. It is the God who does or does not do these kinds of things that is simple. Both are concerned to show that the first God is not engaged in the act of creating a material universe. At this point in our study, it would appear that the fears of some modern theologians, who hold that the doctrine of simplicity is incompatible with the Christian account of the Creator, would seem to be justified. Yet, there are strong disanalogies between the modern criticism of the view that simplicity and creation are compatible and Ptolemy's rejection of the same. Most importantly, modern Christians operate with what might be called a 'grammar of divinity' that is fundamentally different from that with which Ptolemy worked.[43] For

[41] Fr. 12: *τὸν μὲν πρῶτον θεὸν ἀργον εἶναι ἔργων συμπάντων.*

[42] Cf. fr. 15.

[43] I draw the language of a 'grammar' of divinity most directly from David Burrell and Lewis Ayres: see David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina,*

Ptolemy, the incompatibility of simplicity and creation posed no grave problem, as he could argue that a second, intermediary God was responsible for creating the world. Identifying the gulf separating his ability to accept such an answer and the inability of modern Christians to do so is in part the theme of this book. I will suggest that the transformation which Basil and Gregory effected in the doctrine of simplicity created this gulf. After their labours, Christians could (and can) no longer think of divine activity in the world as incompatible with divine simplicity: the world was (and is) no longer viewed as a barrier to God.

For Ptolemy, the simple God is self-subsistent light, and somehow involvement in creating and giving the Law would contradict God's nature. We are not told exactly *why* this must be the case. Ptolemy's claim earlier in the letter[44] that the act of creation is proper to the intermediary does not tell us why such an act is discordant with the Father's nature, only why it is discordant with the adversary's. He does give us reasons for believing that the Father could not have authored the Law: the latter's imperfection cannot have come from the perfect Father.[45] By analogy, the world as imperfect effect may be discordant with the perfect Father. But, even if this is Ptolemy's position, in what does the world's imperfection consist? There is a tension in contemporary Platonist authors like Numenius between holding on the one hand that the world is divine and on the other that it necessarily contains evil in so far as matter is necessary for the existence of the cosmos. Perhaps a similar tension exists in Ptolemy's thought. He certainly associates the principle of evil with materiality. Yet, we cannot necessarily read Numenius' theory of matter *as* the principle of evil into Ptolemy.[46] Unfortunately, we have insufficient

Maimonides, Aquinas (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 1–4; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, ch. 11. The point here is that Ptolemy's ability to speak of a first and a second God reflects a 'grammar' that modern Christians, heirs to developments we will be tracing in this study, find to be in violation of central Christian claims about the unity of God. This reflects *our* assumptions about 'monotheism', rather than those of ancient philosophers and theologians: cf. Michael Frede and Polymnia Athanassiadi (eds.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity.*

44 *Ep.* 3.6.

45 *Ep.* 3.4.

46 For Numenius' theory, see esp. fr. 52 (=Calcidius, *In Timaeum*, 295–9).

evidence to determine why Ptolemy held simplicity to be incompatible with the creation of the cosmos. The fact that the doctrine did influence his theology of creation (even if only negatively), however, does show its relevance for basic exegetical questions among second-century Roman Christians. Simplicity was becoming part of the set of interpretive tools by which Christians grappled with their texts—and hence with their God. Yet, thus far it appears as largely a negative doctrine: a simple God could not have done *these* kinds of things.

2

From Science to Silence: Clement of Alexandria and Origen

If second-century Christian intellectuals like Ptolemy were embroiled in controversy over the nature of God's activity (and over *which* God is active), the picture they attempted to present to the outside world was quite the opposite. For Christian apologists of this era, Christians uniquely and *uniformly* possess knowledge that the pagan world lacks: hence the disagreement among the (non-Christian) philosophical schools. The picture was self-serving, to be sure, and has parallels in arguments made by non-Christian philosophers themselves.[1] Still, the apologetic task fostered an attempt to articulate the nature of this knowledge. Most of this chapter examines Clement of Alexandria, whose enigmatic text the *Stromateis* offers perhaps the most thorough such attempt.

In the last chapter we saw that Ptolemy acutely sensed that the various things Christians were saying about God did not tally: without appropriate distinctions, Christian speech was in danger of foundering on the problem of contradiction. In this chapter, I will suggest that Clement articulated with remarkable force another potentially fatal danger for theological epistemology. Clement saw the irreducible gap between portraying Christian faith as scientific *knowledge* and saying anything meaningful about its ultimate referent. If, as Clement argues, in order to make meaningful utterances

[1] For Platonist appropriation of the sceptical argument from disagreement as an argument for Platonism, see G. A. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 125–50.

within a system of scientific knowledge, one must be able to reason from first principles, then no meaningful utterances can be made about the ultimately first principle, God. If God is simple and prior to all systems of classification, and if knowledge requires 'getting behind' the objects of one's knowledge, then God cannot be known. Clement's standards for knowledge are strict, but commonplace in the philosophy of his day. Knowledge, for him, must rest upon infallible foundations. But none of the foundations we ordinarily rely upon—perception, reason, or even scripture—can fulfil this role in claims about God, who transcends them. In this way, divine simplicity entails that we *know* nothing about God. This apophaticism regarding God the Father doesn't leave us with nothing to say; Clement in fact holds that there is a theological science. Yet, this science operates at a lower level than God the Father. For Clement, as for many in his age, levels of knowledge map directly onto levels of reality. The present chapter will track Clement's dialectic of knowledge and what transcends knowledge. We will spend most of our efforts on Clement's *Stromateis*, pausing at the end to see how Origen picks up on these themes and develops them further.

By examining Clement's account of the Father's simplicity and utter ineffability together with his account of the requirements of scientific knowledge, I want to suggest that Clement is led to conclude that nothing can be said or known about God, not because of the requirements of divine simplicity—after all, others appeal to simplicity without drawing this inference—but because of what he takes to be the standards for knowing. To say that God cannot be known presupposes some account of knowledge and its limits, and Clement's account is severe. Clement is akin to Eunomius in this regard, though Eunomius believes that he *does* know God. Basil and Gregory differ from both in that they deny that there is just one thing called knowledge, and that its model is Aristotelian science. It would be wrong, then, to arrange Clement, the Cappadocians, and Eunomius along a common spectrum, where they differ simply on the degree of human knowledge of God, with Clement claiming none, Eunomius claiming a lot, and the Cappadocians claiming something in between, rather like a pair of epistemological

Goldilockses.[2] The dispute is not primarily over the amount of knowledge one can have, but over what we mean by 'knowledge' in this context.

CLEMENT'S THEOLOGICAL SCIENCE

For Clement, knowledge is scientific understanding (ἐπιστήμη). His presentation of the project of the Christian 'knower' (γνωστικός), which goes under the title *Stromateis*, is enigmatic to be sure. Yet, there is significant epistemological content in it: he is trying to portray Christian theology as a science. This science is rooted in faith, with the contents of scripture serving as its first principles. These principles are 'simple' (ἁπλοῦς) in the sense that they are logically prior to the deductions drawn from them within the science.[3] Thus they are indemonstrable; one may reason *from* such principles, but one will never reason *to* them; one cannot establish them rationally. And yet, they are not *absolutely* simple, for beyond them lies the absolutely simple Father. Knowledge is what derives from the first principles. Therefore, there is and can be no knowledge of the Father. Thus, Clement's radical apophaticism follows from his notion of theology as science.

[2] Perhaps it will help to draw an analogy with contemporary epistemology. Hilary Putnam has argued that the sort of realism which claims to know 'things as they are in themselves' and the denial that one can have any knowledge of 'objective reality' that one finds in Richard Rorty are mirror images. Both assume a picture of objective knowledge as standing apart from one's beliefs and comparing them with reality in itself. For Putnam, this is a nonsensical view, but one side affirms its possibility, the other denies it. As Putnam notes, however, if it is nonsensical to affirm something, it is nonsensical to deny it. We can perhaps view the Cappadocians as making a roughly analogous point: they are not saying we have more knowledge than Clement claims or less knowledge than Eunomius claims, but are asking whether it makes sense to speak of theological knowledge exclusively in terms of objective, scientific knowledge. See Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 100–1.

[3] For this use of ἁπλοῦς in Clement, see *Strom.* 2.4.14; 8.3.6–7; 8.6.18. As with many Christian authors, Clement also uses ἁπλότης as a description of ordinary Christian believers. On Clement's attitude to simple faith, see Lilla, *Clement*, 136–42.

Clement displayed a keen interest in the philosophical logic of his day.[4] He showed awareness of logical discussions among Stoics, Peripatetics, Platonists, Sceptics, and even Epicureans.[5] His task was to set forth a *Christian logic*, a logic that would define what it means to 'seek' and to 'find' within the context of Christian revelation.[6] Central to this project was his use of the theory of demonstration and indemonstrable first principles. Some of this material appears in the so-called eighth book of the *Stromateis*, a text whose purpose and whose relation to the rest of the *Stromateis* remain mysterious to modern interpreters. Since von Arnim, it has been held to be, not an independent book, but rather more like a set of notes on logical and epistemological topics.[7] This may be a compilation that Clement made of scholastic manuals of logic. What is clear is that the account of logical demonstration in the 'eighth book' significantly informs arguments in the rest of the *Stromateis*. At 8.3.7, Clement sets forth a disjunction: "Either all things require demonstration or some things are *per se* trustworthy."[8] This is supposed to be an exclusive disjunction: either it is the case that every claim, if it is to be true, must be demonstrable (and knowing it would simply be knowing the demonstration of it) *or* it is the case that some claims (or, indeed, 'things') are so inherently believable that they are certain without any demonstration of their truth from prior premises. And both cannot be the case. But what are these 'things' and what would it mean for them to be *per se* trustworthy or to require demonstration?

[4] Note that ancient logic included what we would call epistemology.

[5] At *Strom.* 2.4.16.3, Clement refers to Epicurus' doctrine of *πρόληψις* with approval. As far as I know, it is only in this 'logical' sphere of philosophy that Clement finds Epicurus to his liking. Moreover, as Lilla has observed, this likely results from the agreement of Epicurus with the Stoics here. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria*, 129–30. The historical story behind this agreement, which Lilla does not note, is that the Stoics got this doctrine—as so many others in their epistemology—from Epicurus, not vice versa.

[6] See *Strom.* 8.1 and the use of Mt. 7:7/Lk. 11:9 (*ζητεῖτε καὶ εὑρήσετε . . .*) there. Jesus' word for seeking is the verbal form of a traditional (by Clement's time) philosophical word for enquiry, *ζήτησις*.

[7] I. von Arnim, *De octavo Clementis Stromateorum libro* (Rostock Progr., 1894).

[8] GCS 3: 83.16–17: *Ἤτοι δὲ πάντα ἀποδείξεως δεῖται ἤ καὶ τινα ἐξ αὑτῶν ἐστι πιστά.*

We will gain some ground in answering these questions once we grasp Clement's philosophical background. His disjunction is highly reminiscent of Aristotle's argument against two theories of knowledge and demonstration in the *Posterior Analytics* I.3.[9] At 72b5–7, Aristotle offers the following description of the theories: "Now some think that because one must understand the primitives there is no science at all; others that there is, but that there are demonstrations of everything."[10] As Aristotle goes on to say, the two positions are agreed on the thesis that

(A) all science (ἐπιστήμη) results from demonstration (ἀπόδειξις).

Both positions seem further to agree that

(B) all demonstration employs prior truths as premises to posterior conclusions.

Aristotle's response is to accept (B) while denying (A). In other words, he argues that some scientific understanding is indemonstrable: "But *we* say that neither is all science demonstrative, but in the case of the immediates it is non-demonstrable."[11]

The parallel with Clement's disjunction above is clear: Clement has turned this sentence into a disjunction, and has replaced "immediate" with "*per se* trustworthy".[12] He has understood Aristotle well here. Immediacy is but one of four criteria that Aristotle articulates for indemonstrable principles (ἀρχαί). Such principles must be true,

[9] As has been noticed by Lilla, *Clement*, 121–2.

[10] Using W. D. Ross's OCT text (Oxford, 1964): Ἐνίοις μὲν οὖν διὰ τὸ δεῖν τὰ πρῶτα ἐπίστασθαι οὐ δοκεῖ ἐπιστήμη εἶναι, τοῖς δ' εἶναι μέν, πάντων μέντοι ἀπόδειξις εἶναι. I have modified Jonathan Barnes's translation, rendering ἐπιστήμη as 'science' rather than 'understanding'. His translation may be found in Jonathan Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), I: 117. Commentators have attempted to identify the holders of the positions Aristotle attacks. The first could go back to Antisthenes; the second could be associated with Xenocrates and his followers or with the young Aristotle. All of these are conjectures. See Barnes's commentary *ad loc.*

[11] *APo* 72b19–20.

[12] The parallelism is further reinforced by the fact that, at 8.3.7, Clement argues that the position that all science is demonstrable would lead to an infinite regress (εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκβησόμεθα), which Aristotle also mentions with respect to the sceptical position. Both Clement and Aristotle agree with this position on the point that, if all knowledge is demonstrative, and if demonstration requires knowledge of prior truths, then there is either some absolutely prior indemonstrable truth or there is infinite regress and hence no ἐπιστήμη.

prior, immediate, and explanatory of the conclusions drawn from them.[13] Aristotle speaks of such principles as "convincing not on the strength of anything else but of themselves".[14] Those truths that fulfil these criteria are principles of demonstrative sciences. Accordingly, they function as prior premises that aid in enquiry that seeks (logically posterior) conclusions. One does not reason about them; rather, since they are convincing (*ἔχοντα τὴν πίστιν*) simply in virtue of themselves one has "understanding" (*νοῦς*) of them.[15] This understanding then enables scientific research.

It is important to note that for both Aristotle and Clement, it is not just logically prior propositions which serve as principles for science but also things. As Terence Irwin explains:

> We come to know, e.g., that there are four elements, and this proposition that we know is a first principle; but the four elements themselves are also first principles and are prior and better known by nature. Actually existing things are first principles because they explain other things, and our knowledge of the world requires us to know the explanatory relations in it.[16]

Just as both beliefs about the elements and the elements are first principles for Aristotle, so too both scriptural statements[17] and the Logos itself are first principles in Clement's theological science.

Clement models his account of the nature of theology on Aristotelian science. Clement derives his understanding of Aristotle in part through more proximate authors.[18] It is instructive that both the

[13] *APo* 71b20–4.

[14] *Topics* 100b18–19: *τὰ μὴ δι' ἑτέρων ἀλλὰ δι' αὑτῶν ἔχοντα τὴν πίστιν*.

[15] See *APo* 2.19.

[16] Terence Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 4; on the interrelation of explanation and definition, see David Charles, *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence.*

[17] Lilla, *Clement*, 138: "That the content of scripture becomes the *ἀρχή* of demonstration is shown by the comparison between *Strom*. vii. 96.1, *ἀπ' αὐτῶῶν περὶ αὐτῶῶν τῶῶν γραφῶῶν ἀποδεικνύντες* (cf. also *Strom*. vii. 93.1, *πρὶν ἂν τὴν ἀπόδειξιν ἀπ' αὐτῶν λάβωμεν τῶῶν γραφῶν*), and *Strom*. vii. 96.5, *πίστει περιλαβόντες ἀναπόδεικτον τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκ περιουσίας καὶ τὰς ἀποδείξεις παρ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀρχῆς περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς λαβόντες*." Lilla goes on to cite *Strom*. 2.49.3; 5.18.3; and 7.57.3 in support of this reading. Berchman also argues this point: *From Philo to Origen*, 177.

[18] This source-critical work on Clement's epistemology and doctrine of "faith" has already been done admirably by Lilla (*Clement*, ch. III.1) and Berchman (*From Philo to Origen*, 176–81).

Middle Platonist Alcinous and Clement refer to the first principles of scientific reasoning as "simple", which has only indirect roots in Aristotle's text.[19] Clement seems to model his account of scripture's function as principle on philosophical discussions of perception (*αἴσθησις*) and thinking (*νόησις*) as providing principles or criteria of demonstrative reasoning.[20] As he argues in *Strom.* 8.3.7, there are other principles "after the source which comes from faith", which also function in demonstrations. These are the objects of perception and thought, which he says are "simple".[21] Elsewhere, he draws a parallel between sense-based knowledge and knowledge that comes from scripture.[22] For Clement, the simplicity of sensible and intelligible principles is a function of their priority: they are as yet uncombined into logically complex thoughts. These form the basis of scientific demonstration only when they have the property of being "evident" (*ἐναργής*). In this case, the demonstrations deduced from them are no less reliable or trustworthy than the data themselves. Thus, "faith" (*πίστις*) would be the proper attitude towards these data and the conclusions drawn from them. Yet, Clement clearly distinguishes this from the primary form of *πίστις*. He says that the principles that come from perception and thinking are "after" the principle of faith. However, he also says, with reference to the objects of thinking, that these are "primary" in their own way. How are we to reconcile these statements?

[19] See Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 4.6 and Dillon's commentary *ad loc.* (p. 68). As Dillon notes, Aristotle only uses the adverbial form *ἁπλῶῶς*, which usually has the sense in Aristotle of 'without qualification'.

[20] Clement uses the language of 'evidence' (*τὸ ἐναργές*), which was originally in Epicurean and Stoic philosophy a feature of perceptual impressions that counted as criteria of truth. As Raoul Mortley notes, Clement uses this language of 'evidence' to describe scripture and the incarnation: *Connaissance religieuse et herméneutique chez Clément d'Alexandrie* (Leider.: Brill, 1973).

[21] Compare Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 4.7. Yet, Clement seems closer to the 'Stoicizing' account given by the very early Middle Platonist Antiochus of Ascalon, reported by Cicero at *Academica Priora* 19–21. He also agrees with Theophrastus (cited at *Strom.* 2.2.9) and disagrees with Alcinous (*Didaskalikos* 4.6–7) in saying that *ἐπιστήμη* has *αἴσθησις* as one of its constituent parts and its "foundation" (*Strom.* 2.4.13.2–3). On these points, Clement shows more sympathy with Stoic and Peripatetic epistemology than with strict Platonism by giving greater value to the role of perception in science than his contemporary Middle Platonists.

[22] *Strom.* 2.2.9.

At *Strom.* 2.4.13, he offers a fuller account of how perception and thinking, and their objects, differ from the absolutely first principle. This account will bring us to *divine* simplicity. I will quote it at length, interspersed with commentary.

Now, there being four things in which the true resides, namely, perception, understanding, science, and belief, intellect is prior in nature, but perception is prior for us and with respect to us. Moreover, the essence of science is constituted from both perception and understanding, and the property of being evident is common to both understanding and perception. But perception is a foundation for science, while faith, when it has travelled through sensible objects, leaves behind belief, hastens towards things free of deception, and reposes in the truth.[23]

The four epistemological terms with which the passage begins—perception (*αἴσθησις*), understanding (*νοῦς*), science (*ἐπιστήμη*), and belief (*ὑπόληψις*)—are of Aristotelian origin,[24] though Clement's usage reflects later discussions.[25] In the midst of these familiar terms, *πίστις* makes an abrupt entry, with no clear explanation of how it relates to each of the others. Earlier I noted a close connection in Aristotle between the "convincing" nature of first principles—the fact that they, to render Aristotle's Greek woodenly, "have believability" (*ἔχοντα τὴν πίστιν*)—and the fact that "understanding" (*νοῦς*) is the epistemological attitude one has towards them. For Clement also, there is an intimate association between "faith" (*πίστις*) and understanding. That is, in terms of the four epistemological terms in Clement's passage, "faith" is the equivalent of "understanding", not of "belief" (*ὑπόληψις*).

[23] GCS 2: 119.20–6: *τεσσάρων δὲ ὄντων ἐν οἷς τὸ ἀληθές, αἰσθήσεως, νοῦ, ἐπιστήμης, ὑπολήψεως, φύσει μὲν πρῶτος ὁ νοῦς, ἡμῖν δὲ καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἡ αἴσθησις, ἐκ δὲ αἰσθήσεως καὶ τοῦ νοῦ ἡ τῆς ἐπιστήμης συνίσταται οὐσία, κοινὸν δὲ νοῦ τε καὶ αἰσθήσεως τὸ ἐναργές. ἀλλ' ἡ μὲν αἴσθησις ἐπιβάθρα τῆς ἐπιστήμης, ἡ πίστις δὲ διὰ τῶῶν αἰσθητῶῶν ὁδεύσασα ἀπολείπει τὴν ὑπόληψιν, πρὸς δὲ τὰ ἀψευδῆ σπεύδει καὶ εἰς τὴν ἀλήθειαν καταμένει.* The translation from "things free" to "truth" is that found in ANF 2: 350.

[24] To my knowledge, there is no single text where these four (and they alone) appear together, but such a list can be easily assembled from a combination of such passages as *APo* 2.19; *de An.* 3.3; and *EN* 6.3.

[25] e.g. his comment about *τὸ ἐναργές* must derive from Theophrastus, fr. 27 Wimmer (=Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 7.218). That Clement knew Theophrastus' epistemology and was thinking about it in this context is proven by his comments at 2.2.9.

That is to say that Clement thinks of "faith" in very different terms from those with which most Christians are familiar. Indeed, Clement says that faith "leaves behind belief" (ὑπόληψις). Faith and belief are in fact quite different. Clement is aware that Aristotelian "belief" can be either true or false,[26] which is not true of Christian faith. At *Strom.* 2.4.16, Clement further specifies the relation between ὑπόληψις and πίστις: "And conjecture, being a weak belief, acts as though it were faith, just as the flatterer plays the friend and the wolf the dog."[27] Here, Clement shows that belief admits of a range of degrees. This sets it off from faith, which in the passage above "hastens towards things free of deception". That is, faith possesses infallibility, having as its objects infallible truths. Clement has gone beyond the text of Aristotle here. Yet, the idea is not foreign to Aristotle. Clement has merely substituted faith for Aristotelian νοῦς, that is, the immediate grasp of first principles discussed in the *Posterior Analytics.*[28] The term "understanding" (νοῦς) drops out of the passage cited above in the final sentence. But the concept does not: it is conveyed, perhaps surprisingly, by the term "faith" (πίστις). Faith—understood in terms of "understanding"—becomes the foundation for theological "science" (ἐπιστήμη).

It is not that Clement's doctrine of faith is beholden strictly to Aristotle. It is more that it is rooted in an overarching desire to provide a foundation for a theological science based on logically prior, indisputable truths. Clement is not an Aristotelian; he is a

[26] At *de An.* 427b25ff., Aristotle argues that ὑπόληψις includes ἐπιστήμη, δόξα (opinion), and φρόνησις, and their opposites as differentiae of itself. At *EN* 1139b17, it is linked with δόξα alone as a fallible "state" of the soul.

[27] GCS 2: 120–1: Ὑποκρίνεται δὲ τὴν πίστιν ἡ εἰκασία, ἀσθενὴς οὖσα ὑπόληψις . . .

[28] Clement himself makes this association: see his 'description' of Aristotle's view of πίστις at *Strom.* 2.4.15: κυριώτερον οὖν τῆς ἐπιστήμης ἡ πίστις καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῆς κριτήριον. The language of 'criterion' here cannot be Aristotle's, but the point is reminiscent of Aristotle's description of νοῦς as ἐπιστήμης ἀρχή at the end of *APo* 2.19 (100b15). Note that in the preceding sentence, πίστις is said to follow on ἐπιστήμη. Clement is invoking the Aristotelian distinction between priority in nature and priority with respect to us, which he has explicitly discussed earlier in 2.4. On this, see John J. Cleary, *Aristotle on the Many Senses of Priority* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988). For Clement, faith follows on science for us, while being naturally prior to it. These two senses of priority correspond to Lilla's first two senses of the word πίστις in Clement: *Clement of Alexandria*, ch. III.1. This complex of priority in nature and posteriority to us is also true of Aristotelian νοῦς, which grasps universals (cf. *APo* 2.19 with 1.2, 71b35ff).

Christian epistemologist. Later in the chapter I have cited, Clement blends his 'Aristotelian' account of faith as "understanding" with an account of faith as "preconception" (*πρόληψις*) that is broadly indebted both to Epicureanism and to Stoicism.[29] Clement uses both Aristotelian and Epicurean-Stoic epistemology in his doctrine of "faith", rightly perceiving parallels between them. Both philosophical accounts were meant to solve the same problem, namely the 'learner's paradox' of Plato's *Meno*: how can one learn if one does not already know something about the sought item? How can it be learning if one does already know? Aristotle explicitly states that his theory of indemonstrable principles is a way of avoiding this paradox.[30] As for the Epicurean and Stoic side, David Sedley and Anthony Long have argued that it too was meant as a solution to the paradox in the *Meno*: "It is as a matter of fact, from Epicurus on, a philosophical commonplace that preconceptions are what make inquiry possible."[31] Clement has read both traditions well, so well that he has accepted the framing of the issue which they addressed. From them, he has conceived the need for trustworthy first principles accepted by intuitive understanding or preconception—which Clement calls "faith"—and yielding genuine scientific certainty.

And yet, the theories provide an awkward fit with Clement's understanding of the Christian "knower". The theories of Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics were meant to enable *learning* and *enquiry*, growth in knowledge. Clement perceives this and sometimes speaks in these terms. Clement argues that faith is the *sine qua non* of learning; learning simply is turning one's preconceptions into "comprehension".[32] Learning also appears in the rest of the passage from *Strom.* 2.4.13, which we have quoted at length above:

[29] *Strom.* 2.14.16–17.

[30] *APo* 71a29–30.

[31] *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 89; see the explicit statement in Plutarch, fr. 215f. (Sandbach). I owe the reference to Jonathan Barnes in Dirk M. Schenkeveld and Jonathan Barnes 'Language', in K. Algra et al. (eds.), *CHHP*, 177–225 at 196 n. 135.

[32] *Strom.* 2.4.17 (GCS 2: 119.13–22): *πῶς δ' ἂν μὴ ἔχων τις πρόληψιν οὗ ἐφίεται μάθοι περὶ οὗ ζητεῖ; ὁ μαθὼν δὲ ἤδη κατάληψιν ποιεῖ τὴν πρόληψιν . . . οὐ μὴ μαθήσεταί τις ἄνευ πίστεως, ἐπεὶ μηδὲ ἄνευ προλήψεως.*

But if someone[33] should say that science is demonstrative along with an account, let him hear that the principles are indemonstrable. And they are not known by any art or wisdom. The latter is concerned with things that are capable of being otherwise, while the former is practical only, and not also theoretical. So then, it is possible to reach the first principle of the universe by faith alone. For every science can be learned. And what can be learned is learned from that which is known beforehand.[34] But the first principle of the universe was not known beforehand by the Greeks . . .[35]

The passage shows the ill fit between Clement's "knower" and the philosophical investigator. Since all learning requires previous acquaintance with at least some aspect of a subject and since the Greeks had no relevant background knowledge of the first principle of everything, the philosophers have been entirely incapable of learning in this case. Clement lists examples of philosophical accounts of the first principle of the universe that fell short: Thales' water and Anaxagoras' mind. In each case, the problem is the failure to understand that that which is absolutely prior is no part of the world; hence it cannot be learned from experience in the world. The theoretical wisdom of Thales and Anaxagoras only left them with objects that "are capable of being otherwise".

We are left then with a contrast between the approach of the "knower", who grasps the first principle in faith and through revelation, and the philosopher whose attempt to demonstrate everything condemns him to perpetual searching. It is not, of course, that the philosopher cannot discover truth, but that he ascertains truth either by stealing it from revealed sources or through a process of rational discovery that has been rendered unnecessary by the direct and

[33] i.e. Aristotle, *APo* 2.19, 100b10: *ἐπιστήμη δ' ἅπασα μετὰ λόγου ἐστί*. Though note that Clement is arguing *for* the Aristotelian doctrine of first principles. Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 28a, on the realm of Being (as opposed to becoming): *τὸ μὲν δὴ νοήσει μετὰ λόγου περιληπτὸν ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὄν*.

[34] Aristotle, *Metaph.* A9, 992b30–1: *πᾶσα μάθησις διὰ προγιγνωσομένων*.

[35] *Strom.* 2.4.13–14 (GCS 2: 119.26–32): *εἰ δέ τις λέγοι τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἀποδεικτικὴν εἶναι μετὰ λόγου, ἀκουσάτω ὅτι καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἀναπόδεικτοι· οὔτε γὰρ τέχνῃ οὔτε μὴν φρονήσει γνωσταί. ἣ μὲν γὰρ περὶ τὰ ἐνδεχόμενά ἐστιν ἄλλως ἔχειν, ἣ δὲ ποιητικὴ μόνον, οὐχὶ δὲ καὶ θεωρητική. πίστει οὖν ἐφικέσθαι μόνῃ οἷόν τε τῆς τῶν ὅλων ἀρχῆς. πᾶσα γὰρ ἐπιστήμη διδακτή ἐστι· τὸ δὲ διδακτὸν ἐκ προγινωσκομένου. οὐ προεγινώσκετο δὲ ἡ τῶν ὅλων ἀρχὴ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν . . .*

conclusive grasp of faith.[36] Clement contrasts faith with the demonstrative approach to the first principle:

> Science is a demonstrative state, while faith is a grace causing one to ascend from indemonstrable things to that which is absolutely simple, which is neither with matter nor is it matter nor is it made by matter.[37]

The "indemonstrable things" are the data of Christian revelation which comes through the Son or Word of God. Without this revelation from outside the realm of perception and reasoning, humans could never approach the origin of this universe, which Clement calls here "that which is absolutely simple". As we will see in the next section, this approach is not a matter of learning things about the simple God, but rather of deepening our sense of God's utter ineffability.

CLEMENT'S RADICAL APOPHATICISM

In perhaps the most commented-upon text in the *Stromateis*, 5.12, Clement provides an account of the unknowability of the first principle.[38] Clement's discussion of divine ineffability is based on Middle Platonist reflections on Plato's *Parmenides*.

> Indeed this discourse concerning God is most difficult to handle. For since the principle of every thing is hard to find, it is in every way hard to show forth the first and oldest principle, which is the cause for all other things of the fact that they are becoming or have come into being. For how could one express that which is neither genus, nor difference, nor species, nor individual, nor number, and neither is it any accident, nor anything in which an accident exists. Nor would one rightly call it a whole, for 'the whole' is applied to magnitude and he is Father of the whole. Nor ought one to say

[36] See esp. *Strom.* 1.20. For discussion of the idea of pagan 'theft' of revealed wisdom, see Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy.*

[37] *Strom.* 2.4.14 (GCS 2: 120.5–8): *ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐπιστήμη ἕξις ἀποδεικτική, ἡ πίστις δὲ χάρις ἐξ ἀναποδείκτων εἰς τὸ καθόλου ἀναβιβάζουσα τὸ ἁπλοῦν, ὃ οὔτε σὺν ὕλῃ οὔτε ὕλη οὔτε ὑπὸ ὕλης.*

[38] For a thorough recent account of Clement's apophaticism, see Henny Fiskå Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Apophaticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

that there are any parts of it, for the One is indivisible, and on account of this it is also infinite, this not being understood in terms of the impossibility of going through it, but in terms of it having no extension or limits. And therefore it is without form and nameless.[39]

This passage sets forth the conditions under which a principle is not expressible (*ῥητόν*). It is closely parallel to a passage in the *Didaskalikos* by the (probably second-century) Middle Platonist Alcinous:

God is ineffable and graspable only by understanding, as we have said, since he is neither genus, nor species, nor differentia, nor does he possess any attributes, neither bad (for it is improper to utter such a thought), nor good (for he would be thus by participation in something, to wit, goodness), nor indifferent (for neither is this in accordance with the concept we have of him), nor yet qualified (for he is not endowed with quality, nor is his peculiar perfection due to qualification) nor unqualified (for he is not deprived of any quality which might accrue to him). Further, he is not a part of anything, nor is he in the position of being a whole which has parts, nor is he the same as anything or different from anything; for no attribute is proper to him, in virtue of which he could be distinguished from other things. Also, he neither moves anything, nor is he himself moved.[40]

[39] *Strom.* 5.12.81–82 (GCS 2: 380.14–25): *ναὶ μὴν ὁ δυσμεταχειριστότατος περὶ θεοῦ λόγος οὗτός ἐστιν. ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἀρχὴ παντὸς πράγματος δυσεύρετος, πάντως που ἡ πρώτη καὶ πρεσβυτάτη ἀρχὴ δύσδεικτος, ἥτις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν αἰτία τοῦ γενέσθαι καὶ γενομένους εἶναι. πῶς γὰρ ἂν εἴη ῥητὸν ὃ μήτε γένος ἐστὶ μήτε διαφορὰ μήτε εἶδος μήτε ἄτομον μήτε ἀριθμός, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ συμβεβηκός τι μηδὲ ᾧ συμβέβηκέν τι. οὐκ ἂν δὲ ὅλον εἴποι τις αὐτὸν ὀρθῶς· ἐπὶ μεγέθει γὰρ τάττεται τὸ ὅλον καὶ ἔστι τῶν ὅλων πατήρ. οὐδὲ μὴν μέρη τινὰ αὐτοῦ λεκτέον· ἀδιαίρετον γὰρ τὸ ἕν, διὰ τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ἄπειρον, οὐ κατὰ τὸ ἀδιεξίτητον νοούμενον, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸ ἀδιάστατον καὶ μὴ ἔχον πέρας, καὶ τοίνυν ἀσχημάτιστον καὶ ἀνωνόμαστον.*

[40] *Didaskalikos* 10.4. John Dillon, trans. with introduction and commentary, *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 18, altered; *Alcinoos: Enseignment des doctrines de Platon*, introduction, texte établi et commenté par John Whittaker et traduit par Pierre Louis (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990), 23–4: *Ἄρρητος δ' ἐστὶ καὶ νῷ μόνῳ ληπτός, ὡς εἴρηται, ἐπεὶ οὔτε γένος ἐστὶν οὔτε εἶδος οὔτε διαφορά, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ συμβέβηκέ τι αὐτῷ, οὔτε κακόν· οὐ γὰρ θέμις τοῦτο εἰπεῖν· οὔτε ἀγαθόν· κατὰ μετοχὴν γάρ τινος ἔσται οὕτως καὶ μάλιστα ἀγαθότητος· οὔτε ἀδιάφορον· οὐδὲ γὰρ τοῦτο κατὰ τὴν ἔννοιαν αὐτοῦ· οὔτε ποιόν· οὐ γὰρ ποιωθέν ἐστι καὶ ὑπὸ ποιότητος τοιοῦτον ἀποτετελεσμένον· οὔτε ἄποιον· οὐ γὰρ ἐστέρηταί τινος ἐπιβάλλοντος αὐτῷ ποιοῦ· οὔτε μέρος τινός, οὔτε ὡς ὅλον ἔχον τινὰ μέρη, οὔτε ὥστε ταὐτόν τινι εἶναι ἢ ἕτερον· οὐδὲν γὰρ αὐτῷ συμβέβηκε καθ' ὃ δύναται τῶν ἄλλων χωρισθῆναι· οὔτε κινεῖ οὔτε κινεῖται.*

John Whittaker has pointed out the striking similarities between these two passages, arguing that both derive—independently—from a "theologically inclined Middle Platonic Commentary upon the *Parmenides*, or at least from a Middle Platonic theologico-metaphysical adaptation of the First Hypothesis".[41] The First Hypothesis of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* postulated a one separate from the many. Whatever Plato meant by this 'one', later Platonists (at least after Moderatus in the late first century AD) took this to be about the first principle. That is, the hypotheses were read not merely as logical exercises, but as disclosures of metaphysical truth.[42] This reading of the First Hypothesis led to the development of what we now call 'negative theology', since its outworking required the distinction of 'the one' from all things, including the most general predicates such as 'sameness' and 'difference'. In the context of this argument, Plato also argued that 'the one' was neither a whole nor any part of a whole, a thesis pregnant with implications for simplicity. The 'one' of the First Hypothesis is infinite, as in the Clement passage above (though Clement's distinctions of senses of infinity owes something to Aristotle, *Physics* 204a2ff.).[43] It also has no name, an important point for Clement.

Clement has drawn on this tradition, but he has used it selectively. Unlike Alcinous, Clement places the discussion in the context of the

[41] John Whittaker, 'Philological Comments on the Neoplatonic Notion of Infinity', in R. Baines Harris (ed.), *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, Studies in Neoplatonism 1 (Norfolk, VA: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976), 155–72 at 158. Alcinous 10.4 begins with an allusion to *Phaedrus* 247c and *Timaeus* 28a, as Dillon notes at *Alcinous*, 107. The link between Alcinous and Clement becomes stronger once one notes that both invoke the *Parmenides* in order to defend Plato's ineffability claims in the *Timaeus*.

[42] The classic study is E. R. Dodds, 'The Parmenides of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One', *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928): 129–42. John Dillon has recently challenged Dodd's thesis that the metaphysical/theological reading of the *Parmenides* awaited Neopythagorean authors of the early empire. He has argued that this reading goes back to the Old Academy: *Heirs of Plato: A Study of the Old Academy, 347–274 B.C.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[43] Cf. Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis*, 175–7. See his criticism there of Ekkehard Mühlenberg's argument about the relation of Clement and Aristotle: *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa: Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassischen Metaphysik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 75–6.

theory of demonstration and first principles, which we examined in the previous section. Clement brings in Platonist negative theology to explicate the non-demonstrability, and hence ineffability, of the absolutely simple first principle of the universe.

Divine simplicity enters into the passage in Clement's arguments—more extensive than those of Alcinous—that the One is neither whole nor part and that the One is not finite. According to Clement, the One is not a whole for two reasons.[44] First, wholeness is a predicate of magnitude, whereas the One is "indivisible". Magnitudes are wholes and hence in some sense divisible.[45] Second, the One is "Father of the whole".

In denying that the One is a whole, Clement obviously is affirming divine simplicity, though he does not use the word. Simplicity here is basically synonymous with indivisibility. The fact that God is infinite is also presented here as connected with God's indivisibility. What is divisible must have parts. But the limits, the beginning and end, are parts.[46] Therefore, the indivisible, in having no parts, has no limits. And what does not have limits is infinite. For Clement, God is not infinite in the way that an infinite magnitude would be (if such a thing were possible). That is, it is not because one cannot traverse the 'distance' of God that God is infinite, but because God has no extension, and hence no 'distance'.

The passage continues, picking up the claim about the namelessness of God above, which was in turn an inference from divine infinity:

> Even if at some time we should name it, calling it, in an improper manner, either One or the Good or Mind or Being-itself or Father or God or Creator or Lord, we say these things not as though we were uttering his name, but, being at a loss, we use good names, so that our reasoning might hold firm,

[44] Note that some translators have misconstrued Clement here; e.g. ANF 2.464 reads: "No one can rightly express Him wholly. For on account of His greatness He is ranked as the All."

[45] Choufrine articulates the link between magnitude, wholeness, and divisibility in Aristotle and Clement. See *Metaphysics* 1020a9: "We call . . . a magnitude that which is divisible into continuous parts." Choufrine also sees that Clement describes Christ in terms of magnitude. Yet, he mistakenly holds that Clement shifts to speaking about Christ in the midst of 5.12.81. *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis*, 172–3 and n. 61.

[46] Cf. Plato, *Parmenides* 137d.

not wandering around in concern with other things, but resting upon these as supports. Each taken individually does not reveal God, but all of them taken collectively are indicative of the power of the Almighty.[47] For predicates are expressed either because of properties that belong to (objects) or because of their relation with one another. But neither of these is admissible concerning God. Rather, he is in no way comprehended by demonstrative science. For that is constituted from prior and more familiar things, whereas nothing is prior to the Ingenerate.[48]

Here we see most clearly the connection between Clement's account of science and his theology. For Clement, we have no proper name for God.[49] This claim, which is drawn from the *Parmenides*, is connected for Clement with the fact that God is beyond "demonstrative science".[50] In order to name God, we would have to in some sense stand 'before' him and analyse his properties and the relations in which he stands to other objects. Alain Le Boulluec has stated that

[47] I take that the point here is not that these terms are collectively indicative of God himself, but of his "power", which is in some sense ontologically inferior. Cf. *Strom.* 5.11.71 (GCS 2: 374.22): *μηδὲ ῥητὸν τὸν θεόν, ἀλλ' ἢ μόνῃ τῇ παρ' αὐτοῦ δυνάμει γνωστόν*; also *Strom.* 2.2.5 (GCS 2: 115.22–3): God is *πόρρω μὲν κατ' οὐσίαν . . . ἐγγυτάτω δὲ δυνάμει*. This picture of God as present to the world by his power links Clement with Numenius: see esp. fr. 50. For a somewhat different interpretation, see Jaap Mansfeld, 'Compatible Alternatives: Middle Platonist Theology and the Xenophanes Reception', in R. van den Broek, T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld (eds.), *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 92–117 at 115.

[48] *Strom.* 5.12.82 (GCS 2: 380.25–382.7): *κἂν ὀνομάζωμεν αὐτό ποτε, οὐ κυρίως καλοῦντες ἤτοι ἓν ἢ τἀγαθὸν ἢ νοῦν ἢ αὐτὸ τὸ ὂν ἢ πατέρα ἢ θεὸν ἢ δημιουργὸν ἢ κύριον, οὐχ ὡς ὄνομα αὐτοῦ προφερόμενοι λέγομεν, ὑπὸ δὲ ἀπορίας ὀνόμασι καλοῖς προσχρώμεθα, ἵν' ἔχῃ ἡ διάνοια, μὴ περὶ ἄλλα πλανωμένη, ἐπερείδεσθαι τούτοις. οὐ γὰρ τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον μηνυτικὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ ἀθρόως ἅπαντα ἐνδεικτικὰ τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δυνάμεως· τὰ γὰρ λεγόμενα ἢ ἐκ τῶν προσόντων αὐτοῖς ῥητά ἐστιν ἢ ἐκ τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσεως, οὐδὲν δὲ τούτων λαβεῖν οἷόν τε περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἐπιστήμῃ λαμβάνεται τῇ ἀποδεικτικῇ· αὕτη γὰρ ἐκ προτέρων καὶ γνωριμωτέρων συνίσταται, τοῦ δὲ ἀγεννήτου οὐδὲν προϋπάρχει.*

[49] Over the next two chapters, we will look at a number of subsequent Christian theologians who argue that we do in fact have such a name, whether it be the 'Ingenerate' or the scriptural language of 'Father'. Basil and Gregory of Nyssa will return to Clement's position on this issue. See Alain Le Boulluec's commentary for some parallels in earlier Christian apologists in SC 279: 265–6.

[50] Cf. *Parmenides* 142a: *Οὐδ' ἄρα ὄνομα ἔστιν αὐτῷ* (sc. *τῷ ἑνὶ*) *οὐδὲ λόγος οὐδέ τις ἐπιστήμη οὐδὲ αἴσθησις οὐδὲ δόξα.—Οὐ φαίνεται.—Οὐδ' ὀνομάζεται ἄρα οὐδὲ λέγεται οὐδὲ δοξάζεται οὐδὲ γιγνώσκεται, οὐδέ τι τῶν ὄντων αὐτοῦ αἰσθάνεται.—Οὐκ ἔοικεν.—Ἦ δυνατὸν οὖν περὶ τὸ ἓν ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχειν —Οὔκουν ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ.*

Clement's argument here is fallacious insofar as it conflates priority in being with logical priority.[51] E. R. Dodds lodged a similar criticism against Proclus.[52] It is telling that Vaggione applied Dodds's criticism to Eunomius: both he and Clement closely associate the ontological and epistemological orders.[53] Clement has yet to begin the disentangling of metaphysics and epistemology; his negative impulses presuppose that what goes for one realm goes also for the other.[54]

Clement proceeds to list names that he believes good theology will use for God. These are justified on the grounds that they are beneficial for us (they keep our minds fixed), rather than their degree of reference or correspondence to some object. We simply would have no criteria for determining the success of such correspondence in the case of a being who is absolutely prior. The argument has proceeded by way of eliminating all possible ways of making God expressible (*ῥητόν*): categorical terms, qualitative descriptions, names. The elimination has now been completed:

> It remains, then, that we know the Unknown by divine grace and by the Word that comes from him alone. . . [55]

Clement proceeds to cite Acts 17:22ff. in support of the identification of this "Unknown God" with the God of revelation. Scripture, as the locus of principles from which the theologian reasons, can and does contain a wealth of positive insight about ourselves and our world. Yet, when it comes to the first principle, scripture is rather like the crater invoked by Karl Barth in discussing revelation: it can only show us the outlines of what is *missing*, what we do *not* know.[56] It reveals a hidden God whom we can only know through grace.

[51] SC 279: 267–8.

[52] Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, Introduction, xxv.

[53] See Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 45 n. 4.

[54] For a similar, but more far-reaching, critique of traditional negative theology, see Joseph S. O'Leary, *Questioning Back: The Overcoming of Metaphysics in Christian Tradition* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 159–60.

[55] GCS 2: 381.7–8: *λείπεται δὴ θείᾳ χάριτι καὶ μόνῳ τῷ παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ λόγῳ τὸ ἄγνωστον νοεῖν . . .*

[56] Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. from the 6th edn. by Edwyn C. Hoskins (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 29.

Yet, there is more to the story, for Clement adds something in *Strom.* 5.12.82 to the picture that we saw earlier about knowing God through grace alone: we also know the unknown God through the "Word that comes from him". This leads us to Clement's theology of the *λόγος*.[57] Of interest to us is Clement's account of how the Word is related to the first principle. For Clement, as for Ptolemy, only the first principle is simple. Yet Clement has a much more subtle account of the Word's unity than we have seen thus far. Again, this account is based on the epistemological theory with which we began:

> God, being indemonstrable, is not the object of scientific knowledge. But, the Son is wisdom, science, truth and all other things of this kind, and indeed he also admits of demonstration and description. All the powers of the Spirit collectively become some one thing when they terminate at the same point, namely the Son. But he cannot be declared by the idea associated with any one of his powers. Moreover, he is not simply one-as-one, nor again is the Son many things-as-parts, but rather he is one-as-all. Hence, he is also all things. For he is a circle of all the powers rolled up into one and unified. Because of this, the Word is called "Alpha and Omega", whose end is a beginning and who finishes again at the original starting point, without any interval. For this reason also, to believe in him and through him is to become unitary (*μοναδικόν*), uninterruptedly united in him, whereas to disbelieve is to be in doubt, separate, and divided.[58]

[57] This aspect of Clement's thought is complex: some scholars have argued that there are in fact three 'stages' or 'levels' of the Word's existence. See Lilla, *Clement*, 201–12; Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*, 55–62. Lilla summarizes on p. 201: "The Logos is, first of all, the mind of God which contains his thoughts; at this stage, he is still identical with God. In the second stage, he becomes a separate hypostasis, distinct from the first principle; in [the third] stage, he represents the immanent law of the universe or, in other words, the world-soul."

[58] *Strom.* 4.25.156–7 (GCS 2: 317–18): *ὁ μὲν οὖν θεὸς ἀναπόδεικτος ὢν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιστημονικός, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς σοφία τέ ἐστι καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀλήθεια καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τούτῳ συγγενῆ, καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀπόδειξιν ἔχει καὶ διέξοδον. πᾶσαι δὲ αἱ δυνάμεις τοῦ πνεύματος συλλήβδην μὲν ἕν τι πρᾶγμα γενόμεναι συντελοῦσιν εἰς τὸ αὐτό, τὸν υἱόν, ἀπαρέμφατος δέ ἐστι τῆς περὶ ἑκάστης αὐτοῦ τῶν δυνάμενων ἐννοίας. καὶ δὴ οὐ γίνεται ἀτεχνῶς ἓν ὡς ἕν, οὐδὲ πολλὰ ὡς μέρη ὁ υἱός, ἀλλ' ὡς πάντα ἕν. ἔνθεν καὶ πάντα· κύκλος γὰρ ὁ αὐτὸς πασῶν τῶν δυνάμεων εἰς ἓν εἰλουμένων καὶ ἑνουμένων. διὰ τοῦτο «ἄλφα καὶ ὦ» ὁ λόγος εἴρηται, οὗ μόνου τὸ τέλος ἀρχὴ γίνεται καὶ τελευτᾳ πάλιν ἐπὶ τὴν ἄνωθεν ἀρχήν, οὐδαμοῦ διάστασιν λαβών. διὸ δὴ καὶ τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν καὶ τὸ δι' αὐτοῦ πιστεῦσαι μοναδικόν ἐστι γενέσθαι, ἀπερισπάστως ἑνούμενον ἐν αὐτῷ, τὸ δὲ ἀπιστῆσαι διστάσαι ἐστὶ καὶ διαστῆναι καὶ μερισθῆναι.*

Earlier we spoke of scripture as providing the resources for demonstrative science. Its multiplicity pointed beyond itself to the faith that comes through grace alone. Now we can add another piece to the puzzle of how this science is grounded: there is a second 'One' in the divine, intelligible realm, which is itself subject to "demonstration and description".[59] While the first 'One' contains none of the attributes that would help us articulate a scientific account of it, the second appears to contain all of them. Clement's two 'Ones' here correspond to the First and Second Hypotheses of the *Parmenides*, respectively.[60] Clement phrases this in terms of the Son's possession of "powers". Clement's powers are the Platonic forms. Earlier, Clement has stated that "mind is the place of the ideas, and mind is God".[61] The lengthy passage above seems to be an exposition of this claim, with particular concern to distinguish the "place of the ideas" from the utterly ineffable God. Clement is in line with many Middle Platonic authors in conceiving the ideas as the 'thoughts' of God.[62] For Clement, it is necessarily the *second* God who has such thoughts.[63] Such multiplicity is inconsistent with the first God's simplicity.

[59] I take the claim that the Son "admits of demonstration" to mean, not that one can 'stand behind' the Son and 'demonstrate' him—since he is a first principle—but that, as first principle, he forms the basis of demonstrations. The Son is the first level of divine reality that can be at all talked about, and therefore forms the basis for all theological speech.

[60] Raoul Mortley, *Connaissance religieuse et herméneutique chez Clément d'Alexandrie*, 73; Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis*, 174–5. The two hypotheses can be found at *Parm.* 137c–142a (First) and 142b–155e (Second).

[61] *Strom.* 4.25.155 (GCS 2: 317.11): *νοῦς δὲ χώρα ἰδεῶν, νοῦς δὲ ὁ θεός*. Cf. *Strom.* 5.11.73 (GCS 2: 375.18–19): *δυσάλωτος γὰρ ἡ χώρα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃν χώραν ἰδεῶν ὁ Πλάτων κέκληκεν*.

[62] Cf. esp. *Strom.* 5.3.16 (GCS 2: 336.8): *ἡ ἰδέα ἐννόημα τοῦ θεοῦ*. See the parallels in Alcinous, Atticus, and Plutarch cited in Lilla, *Clement*, 202. Cf. Clark, *Clement's Use of Aristotle*, 79–84. However, be aware that Clark relied on the narrative according to which the notion of ideas as thoughts of God is a late development in Platonism, which is dependent upon Stoic influence. For a recent argument that this notion goes all the way back to the Old Academy, independent of Stoic influence, see John Dillon, *Heirs of Plato*. Clement sometimes speaks of the divine thoughts as *ἐπίνοιαι*: *Strom.* 6.11.86; 6.17.156. Whatever his language for them, they are clearly paradigms of sensible things: cf. e.g. 5.14.93.

[63] *Strom.* 5.14.93.5. The term "monad" here, as elsewhere, appears to be a name for the Son.

Clement posits levels of unity to explain this phenomenon. We have seen their dependence on the *Parmenides*. Clement's word for the one–many or one-all level of unity is "monad" (μονάς), which functions in his writings as a name of the Son. He has a rather technical account of how one arrives at knowledge of this "monad", namely, by the method of "abstraction" (ἀνάλυσις in Clement; ἀφαίρεσις in some other authors).[64] In the image of the circle above, the Son was the centre-point to which all the radii run. Clement's understanding of the Son as "monad", and the corresponding method of abstraction, is entirely based on viewing the Son as analogous to a geometrical point.[65] One arrives at knowledge of the point by first taking away bodily qualities from an object. Then one takes away "extension in depth" or the third dimension (τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ βάθος διάστασιν), and then extension in "breadth" (πλάτος) and "length" (μῆκος). One arrives at a point, but one still "occupying a position" (θέσιν ἔχουσα). The final step is to take away the conception of "position" itself. At this point, Clement writes, "If, then, having abstracted all the properties of bodies and of the so-called incorporeals, we would cast ourselves into the magnitude of Christ, and by holiness proceed from there to the immensity, we would draw near somehow to knowing the Almighty, not knowing what he is, but what he is not."[66] Notice that the method of abstraction is instrumental or preparatory towards our negative, dim grasp of the first principle, but it is distinct from that stage. This method teaches us to

[64] See Dillon, *Alcinous*, 109–10; Mortley, *From Word to Silence II*, 42–3; Lilla, *Clement*, 221.

[65] At *Strom.* 6.11.90. Clement argues that one of the values of geometry for the Christian Gnostic is that it teaches one to conceive of "length without breadth, surface without depth, and the point without parts". Cf. Aristotle, *Topics* 143b14. It is somewhat unclear what Clement means by associating his complex unity (i.e. the one that is simultaneously "all things") with the geometrical point, abstracted from all physical dimensions. How can the "unit" or complex unity be both "all things" and abstracted from them? A possible answer derives from the image of the "unit" as the centre-point in a circle, where the radii are the "powers" or forms. The "unit" is not so much *identical* with "all things"/"all the powers of the Spirit" as capable of being in relation with all of them, just as the centre-point is not identical with the radii, but is inherently related to them as their end-point. This is different from the Father, who is certainly not identical to anything and is apparently not even related to anything, since no predicate can be combined with him.

[66] *Strom.* 5.11.71.

think abstractly, but ultimately we can only reach the "magnitude of Christ" with any method of human knowing. The abyss that lies behind this remains an utter mystery, shrouded in utter darkness.

Clement therefore posits two levels of 'negative' theology, corresponding to levels of divine unity.[67] "It remains, then, that we know the Unknown by divine grace and by the Word that comes from him alone." Strictly speaking, we have no *knowledge* of the Father. Knowledge stops at the level of the Son, the "monad". The Father, by contrast, is "beyond the monad", as Clement says in the *Paedagogus*.[68] Yet, this claim is not merely an inference from the nature of the *object* known. For Clement, we only know the "monad" by becoming unified ourselves, by being drawn in from the circumference of the circle to its centre, which necessarily brings us towards *one another*. Hence his exhortation:

> Let us, who are many, hasten to be gathered into one love corresponding to the union of the One Being. Similarly, let us follow after unity by the practice of good works, seeking the good Monad. And the union of many into one, bringing a divine harmony out of many scattered sounds, becomes one symphony, following one leader and teacher, the Word, and never ceasing till it reaches the truth itself, with the cry, "Abba, Father".[69]

The human community must come to the complex—yet harmonious—unity of the Son; the structure of salvation mirrors the structure of knowledge.[70] The point of this union out of many lies not simply in itself. Rather, it points beyond itself, teaching us to cry out to what we do not know: "Abba, Father".

Clement's theology of the "absolutely simple" is a series of just such gestures to the Unknown. He mines the epistemological wisdom of his day—especially the Aristotelian theory of demonstration—in order to predict its breakdown at the point of absolute

[67] Mortley, *From Word to Silence II*, 43.

[68] *Paedagogus* 1.8.71.

[69] *Protreptikos* 9.88 (trans. G. W. Butterworth, *Clement of Alexandria: The Exhortation to the Greeks, the Rich Man's Salvation, and the Fragment of an Address entitled To the Newly Baptized*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919, repr. 1982), 195.

[70] I take it that 'knowledge' involves knowing each thing in relation to its intelligible archetype and knowing that archetypal form or power in relation to its centre in the Son. Cf. Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*, 67.

simplicity. Clement is everywhere concerned to justify what we do know, a concern which leaves us with a picture of scripture as providing principles for theological science and with a view of the Word as a complex unity, transcendent yet knowable. Yet, all this leads us to the yawning abyss of simplicity. We can articulate the contours of faith in the One: it is a "one as one", a perfect unity uncombined with any attribute. Yet, even this is merely another negation.

ORIGEN ON SIMPLICITY AND "CONCEPTUALIZATIONS" (ἐπίνοιαι)

In closing this chapter, we need to look at Origen, whose influence on Basil and Gregory is undeniable. Unfortunately, a full account of the complex legacy of Origen in fourth-century theology is beyond the scope of this study. Here, I simply wish to show that while Origen develops some of Clement's ideas, he never embraces radical apophaticism. I also hope to suggest ways in which his complex suggestions regarding divine simplicity and theological epistemology find echoes in both the Cappadocians and Eunomius.

One way in which Origen advances the discussion is by developing the idea that the various titles used for Christ are to be understood as "conceptualizations" (ἐπίνοιαι). We can see him interacting with Clement on this point. In *Stromateis* 4.25.156, a passage quoted above, Clement says that the Son is "wisdom and science and truth and all other things of this kind". In the context, Clement is arguing that the Son is capable of being described, since he is a complex unity, as opposed to the Father's indescribable, simple unity. In his *Commentary on John*, Origen shows evidence of being influenced by this passage as he develops his understanding of the Son's titles as "conceptualizations". This idea will be of considerable interest when we get to Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa.

For Origen, it is explicitly based on the distinction between simple and complex unity that we have observed in Clement:

God is altogether one and simple. But our Savior, on account of the multiplicity (of created things), since "God set him forth as a propitiation" and a first-fruit of the entire creation, becomes many things or perhaps even all these things, in accordance with which the entire creation that is capable of being saved longs after him.[71]

It is hard to imagine a better summary of Clement's theology. The parallels between this passage and *Strom.* 4.25.156–7 are striking, especially in the distinction between absolute, simple unity and relative unity.

In *Strom.* 4.25.156, Clement also lists a number of titles that apply to the Son: "wisdom, science, truth and all other things of this kind" (*ὁ δὲ υἱὸς σοφία τέ ἐστι καὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀλήθεια καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τούτῳ συγγενῆ*). Clement is clearly placing these terms into a common category, of which there could be other members.[72] Yet, he neither gives us any criteria for determining why these terms (or other potential candidates) fit into the category nor provides any generic name for it. The identity of the category must be related to the assertion that the Son admits demonstration and description; hence all these are in some sense 'epistemological' terms. In Clement, then, the Son's bearing of titles is related to his non-simple unity. The same point is made by Origen. Like *nous* in Plotinus' metaphysics, for Origen the Son contains all the Forms and so is complex—though one should note that, for Origen, the Father is also *nous*.[73] The passage quoted above on the Son's complexity comes from Origen's famous extended account of the diverse biblical names or "conceptualizations" of Christ. Before turning to the vexed question of what a "conceptualization" is for Origen, it will be useful to ask which terms count as "conceptualizations".

[71] *Comm. Jn.* 1.20.119 (SC 120: 120): *Ὁ θεὸς μὲν οὖν πάντη ἕν ἐστι καὶ ἁπλοῦν· ὁ δὲ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν διὰ τὰ πολλά, ἐπεὶ "προέθετο" αὐτὸν "ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον" καὶ ἀπαρχὴν πάσης τῆς κτίσεως, πολλὰ γίνεται ἢ καὶ τάχα πάντα ταῦτα, καθὰ χρῄζει αὐτοῦ ἡ ἐλευθεροῦσθαι δυναμένη πᾶσα κτίσις.*

[72] For uses of similar vague phrases with *συγγενῆ*, see, e.g. *Philebus* 11b7–8: *τὸ φρονεῖν καὶ τὸ νοεῖν καὶ μεμνῆσθαι καὶ τὰ τούτων αὖ συγγενῆ*; ibid. 19d; Aristotle, *Categories* 9a30.

[73] See Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*, 129–30 (commenting on *Contra Celsum* 6.63–4; *Comm. Jn.* 19.22.324; *De principiis* 1.4.4–5).

Origen's criteria for what is included in the category of names for the Son are clearer than we have seen in Clement. Origen's criteria for "conceptualizations" follow from close, grammatical exegesis of NT passages such as 1 Cor. 1.30 (*ἐξ αὐτοῦ* [sc. *τοῦ θεοῦ*] *δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ' Ιησοῦ, ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμὸς καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις*). The terms Paul lists here—wisdom, justice, sanctification, redemption—are central "conceptualizations" of Christ for Origen. He also includes names that the Son applies to himself in the Gospels, such as "light" and "door". In his *Commentary on Jeremiah*, Origen comments on Jer. 10:12, which speaks of "God's understanding" *φρόνησις αὐτοῦ* [sc. *τοῦ θεοῦ*] by which God "stretched out the heaven". Origen then cites Prov. 3:19, which parallels *φρόνησις* with *σοφία*, both of which appear as instruments of divine creative activity. The fact that the two terms are linked to one another justifies Origen in reading *φρόνησις* as a name of Christ, since *σοφία* is a scriptural name of Christ.[74] But how do we know the latter is a title of Christ? Origen's argument is based on the way in which the genitive "of God" is used for names of Christ. "For all such things as are *of God*, are Christ: he is the wisdom of God, he is the power of God, he is the justice of God, he is sanctification, he is redemption. In this way he is the prudence of God." Origen's reading of 1 Cor. 1.24, 30 establishes an exegetical principle: for any term *x*, if scripture says that there is an *x* of God, then *x* is a name of Christ.[75]

In sum, then, we have the following methods for finding out when we are dealing with a "conceptualization" of Christ:

(1) Direct description by a NT writer, as in 1 Cor. 1.24, 30.
(2) Self-descriptions by Jesus, such as "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12; 9:5; 12:46).
(3) Any passage that asserts that there is an *x* 'of God', even where Christ is not specified as the subject, as in Jer. 10:12. This principle is an inference from passages that fall under (1), which contain direct statements of the sort: 'Christ is the *x* "of God".'

74 For a similar use of *φρόνησις* and *σοφία* as parallels, see Porphyry, *The Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey*, 32.

75 This must include terms that are *x* "from God" (*ἀπὸ θεοῦ*), as in 1 Cor. 1.30.

Origen gives the "conceptualizations" a categorical name, which we will see again in Gregory of Nyssa: he calls them the "goods". His basis for this is Isa. 52:7 and its citation by Paul in Rom. 10:15. This verse proclaims the feet of those who bring good news "good" or "beautiful" (*ἀγαθά*). For Origen, the "good things" (*ἀγαθά*) that are the subject-matter of the 'evangelization' are identical with Christ (*Comm. Jn.* 1.8.51–1.9.52). He argues this point through a series of syllogisms. In each, the major asserts that some term *x* is "one good" (*ἓν ἀγαθόν*: *Comm. Jn.* 1.9.53). The minor is then provided by a verse from scripture proclaiming that Christ is *x*. For example, "life (*ζωή*) is one good; but Jesus is life" (*Comm. Jn.* 1.9.53; the minor is based on Jn. 14:6). He provides similar arguments for light, truth, way, resurrection, gate, wisdom, power, word, justice, sanctification, and redemption (*Comm. Jn.* 1.9.53–9). The conclusion is never stated, and so it is unclear whether Origen intends each argument separately to identify Christ with an individual 'good' or whether Origen wants us to think of all these goods as somehow necessarily interconnected. We will see in Chapter 7 that Gregory of Nyssa holds something like the second possibility, with its premise of mutual implication and inseparability among divine attributes.[76]

There is another possibility: perhaps all these "conceptualizations" or "goods" are really identical with one another; that is, perhaps Origen holds to the identity thesis. However, two considerations militate against this possibility. To begin with, Origen nowhere advocates this option. Furthermore, the entire argument is based on an appeal to the Son's unity-in-multiplicity. There would be no point to this if Origen held to the identity thesis.

[76] For Origen's account of the unity of divine attributes, see *Prin.* 2.5. Here, Origen argues (1) that the just and the good God are the same being (cf. *Prin.* 3.1.9–10); (2) that God's justice is good and his goodness is just (2.5.2; SC 252: 300: *nec bonum sine iusto nec iustum sine bono dignitatem diuinae potest indicare naturae*); and, further (3) that justice and goodness are the same virtue (2.5.3; SC 252: 300: *ut sicut unam eandemque nequitiam malitiae et iniustitiae dicimus, ita et bonitatis ac iustitiae uirtutem unam eandemque teneamus*). Though, with point (3), one should contrast 2.5.4, where Origen argues (4) that 'goodness' is the genus of the virtues, while 'justice', 'holiness', etc. are names of particular virtues (SC 252: 302: *Sciens*[sc. *Paulus*] *quippe bonitatem genus esse uirtutum, iustitiam uero uel sanctitatem species generis*. . .).

In contrast, there is a passage in Origen's *On Prayer* which suggests that something like the identity thesis might govern language used for the Father. Here, he says that there is but one name for God, "the name, 'He who is', which is stated in Exodus, *or anything that might be said in the same way*".[77] The final clause indicates that Origen envisages the possibility of other names for God, which will be appropriate provided they can be said "in the same way", that is, with the same signification as "He who is".[78] Over a century later, this would be Eunomius' position, and would be ridiculed by both Basil and Gregory. For Eunomius, the notion that God only has one proper name is a deduction from his simplicity. In the *On Prayer* passage, Origen deduces it from God's immutability, which is likely connected in Origen's mind with simplicity. If so, then Origen has revised Clement's position. As we have seen, Clement holds that *no* name is appropriate for the simple Father. For Origen, God's absolute simplicity implies that *one* name (and its synonyms) are appropriate. Origen does not say, as Eunomius does, that this one name (or its referent) is identical with God or God's essence. Therefore, we cannot attribute to him the identity thesis as a view of language about the Father any more than we can for the Son. Yet, the *On Prayer* passage is striking evidence that he does hold the view that God has but one property or name, being itself. This appears at first glance to be in contradiction with his view that God is "good" or "goodness itself", which is, in Widdicombe's view, Origen's definition of God.[79] But, as Origen himself explains in his *Commentary on John*,

[77] *On Prayer* 24.2: *ἐπὶ δὲ θεοῦ, ὅστις αὐτός ἐστιν ἄτρεπτος καὶ ἀναλλοίωτος ἀεὶ τυγχάνων, ἕν ἐστιν ἀεὶ τὸ οἱονεὶ καὶ ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῦ ὄνομα, τὸ "<ὁ>ὢν" ἐν τῇ Ἐξόδῳ εἰρημένον ἤ τι οὕτως ἂν λεχθησόμενον.*

[78] I am following Maurice Wiles on this point. 'Eunomius: Hair-Splitting Dialectician or Defender of the Accessibility of Salvation?' in Rowan Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 157–72 at 166.

[79] See Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 26. John Dillon has argued that Origen is indebted to Numenius for his distinction between the Father as "goodness-itself" and the Son as "good". 'Logos and Trinity: Patterns of Platonist Influence on Early Christianity', in Godfrey Vesey (ed.), *The Philosophy in Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1–14 at 6–7. The primary texts are Origen, *De prin.* 1.2.13; fr. 6; Numenius, fr. 16.

the problem is merely apparent: being and goodness are not two separate attributes.[80]

Origen's emphasis on 'being' as the proper name of God is related to his understanding of the categories. For Clement, God's simplicity implies that God falls under no category. There is a striking difference between Clement and Origen on this point: for Origen, God is substance (*οὐσία*). It is sufficient for simplicity that God does not possess any attributes that come under the nine accidental categories.[81] For Clement, God's simplicity implies that God transcends all the categories. For Origen, God's simplicity means that God is being itself, with no admixture of relative or accidental being. It is difficult to assess the relative philosophical merits of the two sides objectively, but Origen's view avoids the problems with negative theology which we discussed in the Introduction. Moreover, it won the day: all the figures we will examine in subsequent chapters hold a view identical or similar to Origen's view, as do seminal figures not covered here, such as Augustine and Aquinas. Like Origen, subsequent authors like Gregory of Nyssa may toy with calling God 'beyond being'; but there is no systematic attempt to articulate this, as in Plotinus or even Clement.

Our discussion thus far has suggested that Origen has a method for determining what counts as a conceptualization. And since Origen bases his account of conceptualizations on the complexity of the Son, it would seem that he takes these in a profoundly realist manner. That is, a conceptualization must have an 'objective', mind-independent referent in the Son. A conceptualization therefore is true because it 'corresponds' with the Son's being.

There is, however, evidence which points in a different direction. Like many authors, Origen can use the term as a contrast with words denoting reality, such as *ὑπόστασις* and *πρᾶγμα*.[82] He insists that the distinction between Father and Son is not merely conceptual: they

[80] *Comm. Jn.* 2.13.96. For a discussion of the relation between the two names, "He who is" and "good", see Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, 25–32. There is a similar problem in Plotinus with "the One" and "the Good" as names for the simple, first being.

[81] See Berchman, *From Philo to Origen*, 122.

[82] See J. Wolinski, "Le Recours aux *'ΕΠΙΝΟΙΑΙ* du Christ dans le *Commentaire sur Jean d'Origène*", in Gilles Dorival and Alain Le Boulluec (eds.), *Origeniana Sexta* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 465–92 at 466.

are not distinct merely *kat' epinoian* but also *kath' hupostasin.*[83] It is significant that he applies this sense of *epinoia* to language about the Father. The Father is simple but he is called by multiple names, which are *not* synonyms like 'being' and 'good'. In the *Commentary on John*, he says that 'Father' and 'God' are two ways of looking at God.[84] That is, these terms are diverse *epinoiai* which tell us different things about God without saying anything, positive or negative, about God's simplicity.

It thus seems that Origen is not entirely consistent: sometimes the diversity of *epinoiai* is justified by the complexity of their referent; at other times, it is not. But whether we are to take *epinoiai* in a realist or conceptualist manner in Origen, the important point is that they are non-synonymous. They form a way of preserving the complexity of biblical language. The passage of the Jeremiah commentary quoted above continues by addressing the problematic question of how such a complex of terms refers to a numerically single entity. Origen writes that, "The subject is one, but there are many names because of the differences among the conceptualizations."[85] It is unclear whether these differences are 'real' or merely conceptual, but in a sense it does not matter. What matters is the practice that accompanies the use of *epinoia*, a practice of reflecting on diverse terms *as diverse*: "You do not think the same thing about Christ when you consider him as wisdom and when you consider him as justice."[86] The exegete is to focus on each conceptualization individually, that is, on what that conceptualization means and what it means to predicate that conceptualization of Christ. "For when (you consider) wisdom, you grasp the knowledge of divine and human matters; but when (you consider) justice, (you grasp) the faculty for distributing what is due in every case" (*in Jer.* 8.2).[87] Conceptualizations, then, for Origen, are

[83] See Rowan Williams, *Arius*, 132.

[84] See Wolinski, "Le Recours aux *'ΕΠΙΝΟΙΑΙ*", 466, citing *Comm. Jn.* 19.5.26.

[85] GCS 3: 57.8–9: *ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ὑποκείμενον ἕν ἐστîν, ταῖς δὲ ἐπινοίαις τὰ πολλὰ ὀνόματα ἐπὶ διαφόρων ἐστίν.*

[86] Ibid. 9–11: *καὶ οὐ ταὐτὸν νοεῖς περὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτε νοεῖς αὐτὸν σοφίαν, καὶ ὅτε νοεῖς αὐτὸν δικαιοσύνην.*

[87] Origen apparently uses commonplace philosophical definitions of these terms (though not, I suspect, uncritically): his definition of *φρόνησις* is identical to that found in Alcinous, *Didask.* 29.2. In his commentary (*Alcinous*, 178), Dillon points to

ways of thinking about Christ that are distinct in meaning, yet equally true. Each of these scripturally based conceptualizations provides some vantage point that the others do not.

Origen's doctrine of conceptualizations is central to his understanding of theological and exegetical practice. The language of "conceptualizations" has philosophical precedents, for instance in Stoicism. Yet, the disanalogies between their account of these and Origen's are so strong as to render any hypothesis of 'borrowing' suspect. Moroever, it is more helpful to view Origen's doctrine of conceptualizations as a response to immediate problems under review in his texts. Most importantly, I have suggested, we should view this doctrine as a response to the problem of how the complex variety of scriptural language refers or does not refer to God, given the fact that God is simple. In effect, Origen has saved the multiplicity of this language. In his view, many scriptural *epinoiai* refer not to the simple Father, but to the Son, who is a complex unity. Origen draws this framework of levels of unity from Clement. But he also suggests that a multiplicity of terms can name the simple Father. In the *On Prayer* passage above, the reason given for this was that these terms are synonyms. But in the *Commentary on John* passage, the terms are not synonyms. These two strands in Origen will be taken up respectively by Eunomius and the Cappadocian brothers. This is just one of many ways in which Origen's complex legacy helped give rise to very different theologies in the fourth century.

similar definitions of this term in Apuleius, *de Plat.* 2.6.228; Arius Didymus (*apud* Stobaeus, *Anth.* 2.59.5–6 Wachsmuth-Hense = *SVF* 3.262); Cicero, *de Inv.* 2.160; *ND* 3.38 (deriving from either Poseidonius or Antiochus or both); and Sextus Empiricus, *P* 3.271.

3

Agen(n)êtos and the Identity Thesis: Justin, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Athanasius

This chapter functions as a prelude to the discussion of Eunomius (and by extension of his Cappadocian opponents). Here, I outline the intellectual background that made Eunomius' position intelligible. This involves two steps, which correspond to the parts of the chapter below. In the first part, I discuss some uses of Eunomius' pet term, *ἀγέν(ν)ητος*, before it lost its innocence, so to speak. The term had been used by Christian authors since the second century. But in the Eunomian controversy, it received greater critical scrutiny. Senses of the term previously associated and conflated began to be prised apart. One could no longer simply say 'God is unbegotten'. One had to specify what one meant when one said it. The discussion here traces how Christians of the second and third centuries used the term to cover a range of concepts; these will be sharply distinguished, starting with Athanasius[1] and continuing with Basil and Gregory. Aetius and Eunomius are more traditional than their opponents in so far as their use of 'unbegotten' still retains the multivocal character of earlier uses.

The terms *ἀγένητος* and *ἀγέννητος* have received a fair amount of scholarly attention, and so my account of their history does not need to be exhaustive. I merely intend to outline the use of the terms by two theologians, Justin Martyr and Dionysius of Alexandria, who held it to be uniquely revelatory *before* the formation of the

[1] *Orationes adversus Arianos* (*Ar.*) 1.30–4.

fourth-century doctrinal parties, thereby showing that the use of the terms as something like essential predicates was no innovation of Aetius and Eunomius. Certainly their concern with holding that there is only one ingenerate being, God, was shaped by the preoccupation of an earlier generation with denying that matter is ingenerate alongside God.[2]

My overview of this term's use is meant to underscore two central points relevant to theological epistemology. First, theologians can agree *that* a term is applicable to God without agreeing on what exactly it tells us about God. It is hard to imagine a Christian theologian denying that God is 'ingenerate'. But what kind of statement is this? Does this term name the divine essence? The second key point is that often the differences among theologians in how they understand the function of a term has much to do with their specific polemical contexts. Justin discusses the term 'ingenerate' in the context of a debate between Christianity and Platonism; Dionysius uses it in his work against Sabellius. Dionysius' use reflects a concern with the problem of matter and evil: is matter the source of evil, and, if so, is matter ingenerate?

The first part of the present chapter will hopefully add nuance to the picture painted in Chapter 1. With Ptolemy, we saw that Christians debated which terms are appropriate for God, or which terms are appropriate for *which* God. In this chapter, we will see that, even when there is agreement on which terms to use, various other commitments and concerns can cause authors to interpret the function of these terms differently. Despite the fact that some pre-fourth-century authors, especially Dionysius, identify the term 'ingenerate' as something like an essential predicate of God, they are not as clear on this point as Aetius and Eunomius will be. It is the precision of the latter that provides the fodder for the response by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa.

[2] For the use of the terms in early Christian thought generally, see G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1956), 37–54. For the first half of the fourth century particularly, see Rowan Williams, 'The Logic of Arianism', *JTS* 34 (1983): 56–81 at 66ff.; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea*, 52–61, 112–13, 144. Ayres describes the members of the early fourth-century 'Eusebian' theological trajectory as "theologians of the 'one unbegotten' ".

In the second part of this chapter, I look at Athanasius' argument that simplicity entails that all names said truly and properly of God must name the divine essence. This is significant because it is also, *mutatis mutandis*, the position of Aetius and Eunomius. These two parts provide the necessary background for the rest of the book, which will focus on the antagonists in a highly specific, yet monumentally important, debate in the late fourth century. I call this debate monumental not simply because it led in part to the definition of faith at the Council of Constantinople in 381, nor because it involved two different versions of divine simplicity, but because this was a debate between two diametrically opposed versions of what theology is and how it should be practised. In Eunomius' version, theology possesses knowledge of the divine essence. Hence, theological reasoning will merely be deduction from this. In Basil and Gregory's version(s), the theologian does not and in principle cannot know the divine essence, and so must proceed through scriptural names and images, using these as signposts on the journey towards God. It is all too easy for later Christian theologians, influenced by the success of the Cappadocians and their allies, to prefer the latter position. First we must investigate what made the former appear to Aetius and Eunomius to be not only intelligible, but indeed the only responsible option.

GOD AS INGENERATE

Justin Martyr

For Justin, being ingenerate is part of what it means to be God, at least according to a 'nominal' definition of God that he offers. The term ἀγέννητος appears twenty-one times in Justin's extant works.[3] Most often it is simply used in apposition with θεός and/or πατήρ, without much explanatory comment on the significance of the term.

[3] *Apology* 14.1, 2; 25.2; 49.5; 53.2; *Second Apology* 6.1; 12.4; 13.4; *Dialogue with Trypho* 5.5, 6, 8, 30, 33, 36 (three times in this line), 41; 114.18; 126.11.

However, in *Dialogue with Trypho* 5, Justin deals extensively with two related questions about ἀγέννητος:

(1) which subjects can be rightly called ἀγέννητος; and
(2) in what sense God is ἀγέννητος.

The main purpose of *Dialogue* 5 is to provide an answer to (1), specifically, that God is the only ingenerate being. Yet, this chapter is not about the term ἀγέννητος alone; it is equally about the terms ἀθάνατος (immortal) and ἄφθαρτος (incorruptible). Justin is equally interested in how these terms fit into questions (1) and (2). In the fourth century, Basil and Gregory will attack Eunomius for focusing only on the concept of ingenerate, with little or no accompanying interest in the notions of incorruptibility or immortality. That is, they charge him with only being interested in denying a beginning and not also an end to the divine life. Justin is not guilty of the same flaw. He seems to affirm the principle (found in both Plato and Aristotle) that whatever is subject to generation is subject to destruction; conversely, that what is not subject to one is not subject to the other. He does, however, argue that God can annul the tendency to corruption on the part of created beings by keeping the world and the soul in existence as long as God wishes. The soul is mortal by nature but does not in fact die (except perhaps the souls of the damned). There is a sense, then, in which the soul could be called immortal or incorruptible, though not ingenerate. This suggests that Justin is not interested in answers to (1) and (2) with respect to the terms 'ingenerate' and 'immortal/incorruptible' independently, but rather with respect to a conjunction of both. We can therefore reformulate: in *Dialogue* 5, Justin seeks to answer

(1*) which subjects can be rightly called ἀγέννητος and ἀθάνατος/ἄφθαρτος; and
(2*) in what sense God is ἀγέννητος and ἀθάνατος/ἄφθαρτος.

Justin (that is, the first-person speaker in the dialogue) in this section is still speaking *in persona platonica*, that is, he is representing himself while still in his Platonist phase. He is debating the Christian 'old man' whom he has met and who will lead him to the 'true philosophy' of Christianity. This 'conversion' does not require him to abandon all ideas or doctrines of Platonism, but it does require

him to replace his belief in the authority of Plato with belief in the authority of the Christian scriptures. In *Dialogue* 5, Justin, still a Platonist, takes the view that God is the sole ingenerate to be *the correct interpretation of Plato* (and hence, implicitly, true).[4] He opposes this to the view of "some so-called Platonists" who hold that, in addition to God, the soul also is "both ingenerate and immortal".[5] Again, it is the conjunction that is problematic, if the terms are taken to include statements of fact (actually ungenerated and actually undying) as well as of natural ability (incapable of being generated and incapable of dying). Justin responds by placing the soul along with all things created:

For all things after God that either exist or will at some time exist have a corruptible nature, and are able to be utterly destroyed and no longer exist. For only God is ingenerate and incorruptible. *For this reason he is God*, and all other things after him are begotten and corruptible.[6]

The clearest aspect of this passage is its answer to question (1*): only God is both *ἀγέννητος* and *ἄφθαρτος*. But the italicized words also contain at least part of an answer to question (2*), for they seem to suggest that either the fact that God is ingenerate and incorruptible

[4] Notice that the 'old man's' response at the beginning of *Dial.* 6 is not that 'Plato' (as interpreted by Justin) is right or wrong on this point, but that he *doesn't care* what "Plato and Pythagoras" said about the issue of whether God is the only ingenerate being. I suggest that this will become Justin's attitude after his conversion, or more strongly, his conversion will just be the change to this attitude.

[5] *Dial.* 5.1: *Ἀγέννητος δὲ καὶ ἀθάνατός ἐστι* [sc. *ἡ ψυχὴ*] *κατά τινας λεγομένους Πλατωνικούς*. Compare *Dial.* 5.4 where the contrary (the soul is not ingenerate or immortal) is maintained as an inference from 'what Plato taught in the *Timaeus* concerning the world'. C. Andresen, 'Justin und der mittlere Platonismus', 163–4, argues that Justin in 5.4 is consciously following Atticus' reading of the *Timaeus*, as reported by Eusebius in *praep. ev.* 15.6. Like Justin, Atticus describes this as a disputed point among Platonists, some of whom have been seduced (in his view) by Aristotle's view on the eternity of the world. See also Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, 252–3 on Atticus (cf. also 202–4 for Plutarch and 242–4 for Calvenus Taurus).

[6] Using the translation of Thomas B. Falls (St Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, rev. Thomas P. Halton (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2003), 12), modified and italicized. Greek text: E. J. Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915), 90–265. *ὅσα γάρ ἐστι μετὰ τὸν θεὸν ἢ ἔσται ποτέ, ταῦτα φύσιν φθαρτὴν ἔχειν, καὶ οἷά τε ἐξαφανισθῆναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι ἔτι· μόνος γὰρ ἀγέννητος καὶ ἄφθαρτος ὁ θεὸς καὶ διὰ τοῦτο θεός ἐστι, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ πάντα μετὰ τοῦτον γεννητὰ καὶ φθαρτά.*

or the fact that *only* God is ingenerate and incorruptible is part of the definition of God, part of what makes God, God.

Why does Justin say "for this reason he is God"? To answer this, we need to look back earlier in his discussion with the old man, to *Dialogue* 3.5. The old man asks him, "But what do you call 'God'?"[7] Falls translates this as "But how do you define God?"[8] While nothing in the Greek goes as far as Falls's word "define", he does get across the point that the old man is asking for, and Justin is supplying, a sort of nominal definition, that is, some sort of statement that will help the two of them 'pick out' talk about God from talk about everything else. Justin gives a highly Platonizing answer: "That which always remains the same and in the same state and is the cause of the existence of all other things, this is God."[9] Justin does not offer this as a definition of God's essence in the strict sense, that is as an account of God's essence defined through the classical method of genus and specific difference, which of course does not apply in the case of God anyway. Rather, Justin's 'definition' must be what ancient thinkers called a delineation: an account that tells us enough to pick out one type of items from other types without necessarily rendering that type's essence.[10] Delineations state what is proper to a type and thus serve a heuristic role in enquiring about it; definitions in the strict sense tell a type's genus and difference. The distinction between these two is important for this book, since it implies that thinkers like Basil and Gregory who deny that humans can know the essence of God are not *eo ipso* compelled to say absolutely nothing positive about God.

Justin's 'delineation' of what it is to be God includes two affirmations: (a) that God is unchanging and always the same; and (b) that God is the cause of existence for everything that exists and is not God. Justin is saying that we know we are speaking about God only in so far as our language is governed by both these claims. So, the

7 *Θεὸν δὲ σὺ τί καλεῖς ἔφη.*

8 Justin Martyr, *Dialogue*, trans. Falls, p. 8.

9 *Τὸ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἀεὶ ἔχον καὶ τοῦ εἶναι πᾶσι τοῖς ἄλλοις αἴτιον, τοῦτο δή ἐστιν ὁ θεός.* The language of Justin's definition is indebted to Platonic descriptions of the realm of Being, i.e. the intelligible world; see, e.g. Plato, *Tim.* 29a, 41d; *Phd.* 78c–d; *Phlb.* 61d–e; *Rep.* 479a, e, 484b; *Pol.* 269d.

10 See Porphyry, *in Cat.* 60.15ff. Busse (trans. Steven K. Strange, *Porphyry: On Aristotle Categories* (London: Duckworth, 1992)), with Strange's note 40 on p. 38.

reason Justin says in *Dialogue* 5.4 that God is God on account of the fact that only God is ingenerate and incorruptible is that these terms specify condition (a) in his delineation of God in *Dialogue* 3.5. Otherwise, it is unclear what the significance of "for this reason [i.e. the fact that only God is ingenerate and incorruptible] he is God" would be. When read in light of his earlier delineation of what 'God' means, however, Justin's statement makes sense.

To summarize, Justin does not treat *ἀγέννητος* as an isolated term, but one that gains its full significance only when joined with *ἄφθαρτος* and/or *ἀθάνατος*. That said, Justin does often use *ἀγέννητος* (and not these latter two terms) as an appositional gloss on the words *θεός* and/or *πατήρ*. His frequent usage of the term in this way may be sloppier than his explicit philosophical treatment of it, which pairs the concept of ingenerate with the concepts of incorruptible and immortal. He argues that only God can be spoken of as both ingenerate and incorruptible/immortal. This truth about God is part of what we mean when we say that he is God, for God is nothing if not "that which always remains the same and in the same state". In Justin, then, we see the beginning of the notion (at least among Christians) that *ἀγέννητος* might form part of the nominal definition or delineation of the term 'God'. However, it is far from clear that he would countenance either of the following Eunomian theses: that *ἀγέννητος* names in some real sense the essence of God; or even that *ἀγέννητος* by itself is a meaningful concept.

Dionysius of Alexandria

By contrast, Dionysius of Alexandria endorses both of these theses.[11] Dionysius is one of the most enigmatic early Christian figures for historians since on the one hand he clearly played an important role both in the controversies of his own day (the mid-third century) and as an oft-invoked authority during the controversies of the fourth century, and yet on the other hand the writings of his that survive are

[11] In *ep.* 9, Basil himself suggests Dionysius' influence on Eunomius; cf. Michel Barnes, *Power of God*, 186.

all fragmentary. Many of these are preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Ecclesiastical History* and his *Preparation for the Gospel*; others are preserved by Athanasius in his work *On the Opinion of Dionysius*. A pious legend holds Dionysius to have been a learned pagan who converted to Christianity after reading Paul's letters. Whatever the truth of this legend, Dionysius was evidently learned: he wrote the most extended early Christian response to Epicurean philosophy and headed the catechetical school in Alexandria. In late 247 or early 248, Dionysius became bishop of Alexandria. His episcopacy was marked by both persecution and doctrinal struggle. Dionysius' early zeal expressed in letters he wrote against Sabellianism, which had broken out in nearby Libya, led him to a position deemed extreme by some of his contemporaries. Dionysius attempted to justify (and perhaps soften) his position in a four-volume work, *Refutation and Defence*, which he sent to his namesake, the bishop of Rome. This work was prompted by Dionysius of Rome's concerns (echoed by Basil of Caesarea a century later) that Dionysius' anti-Sabellian concerns led him into the opposite error of dividing the Father and the Son too rigidly.[12]

In Book 7 of his *Preparation for the Gospel*, Eusebius of Caesarea includes a fragment from Dionysius of Alexandria's anti-Sabellian letter in which Dionysius argues that matter (ὕλη) cannot be ἀγένητον alongside God. We must first ask why Dionysius thought the question of matter was relevant to Sabellianism. The connection is not made in the passage, and the only directly anti-Sabellian arguments from Dionysius are only preserved by Athanasius.[13] If we presume that these were part of an original whole together with the arguments preserved by Eusebius, what connected them?

Eusebius gives two pieces of information about the context of this fragment. First, he tells us that it comes from "the first book of

[12] For a survey of the evidence for Dionysius' biography in a social-historical context, see Attila Jakab, 'Denys d'Alexandrie: réexamen des données biographiques', *Recherches augustiniennes* 32 (2001): 3–37; the doctrinal struggles are summarized in Charles Lett Feltoe, *St. Dionysius of Alexandria: Letters and Treatises* (London: SPCK, 1918), 9–34 and more recently in Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, rev. edn. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 150–7 and in John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 201ff.

[13] In his work *On the Opinion of Dionysius* (*De sententia Dionysii*).

[Dionysius'] exercitations against Sabellius".[14] Second, he heads the passage, "Concerning the fact that matter is not ingenerate".[15] This heading suggests that this was, in Eusebius' view at least, the *thesis* of the passage.[16] This lends support to the interpretation that Dionysius is merely ruling out the notion that there can be two ingenerate beings. Certainly, the passage does argue this point. But Dionysius argues this, not from the necessity of a single first principle, but from the impossibility of explaining the simultaneous similarity and dissimilarity between matter and God without recourse to a being prior to both of them, which is impossible in the case of God. To this end, Dionysius offers a definition of the divine essence that excludes the possibility that the Son is in any way 'part' of what it means to be God. In order to see the anti-Sabellian significance of this passage, we must examine Dionysius' definition.

Dionysius says that it is not "permissible" to conceive of a being prior to God. While this is uncontroversial, the inference he appears to draw from this is certainly controversial. He says that the *essence* of God is ingeneracy. He gives a conditional statement (whose truth he obviously accepts): "For if God is the ingenerate-itself and ingeneracy is, as one might say, his essence, then matter would not be ingenerate."[17] There are two terms here that we must puzzle over: what does Dionysius mean by the terms "ingeneracy" (*ἀγενησία*) and "essence" (*οὐσία*)? First, *ἀγενησία*. This abstract noun denotes not the predicate in proposition P 'x is ingenerate', but something like the state of affairs that P describes. P is about the property of being ingenerate. The term that signifies this property, *ἀγενησία*, can be taken in two ways. First, it can denote (1) a property of a given substance. For instance, Simplicius speaks of Aristotle's arguments "concerning

[14] *Praep. ev.* 7.18. Trans. Gifford. Gifford italicizes the final two words '*Against Sabellius*', assuming it was the title of a work. I think this is likely, but have left it undetermined in my text.

[15] Ibid. 7.19: *ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΜΗ ΑΓΕΝΗΤΟΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΥΛΗΝ.*

[16] I know of no evidence that tells us whether this heading was given by Dionysius, Eusebius, or some intermediate editor.

[17] *Praep. ev.* 7.19 (Charles Feltoe, *Letters and Other Remains of Dionysius of Alexandria*, p. 183): *εἰ μὲν γὰρ αὐτοαγένητόν ἐστιν ὁ θεὸς καὶ οὐσία ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ, ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις, ἡ ἀγενησία, οὐκ ἂν ἀγένητον εἴη ἡ ὕλη.*

the ingeneracy of the cosmos" (περὶ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ἀγενησίας).[18] Or, second, it could refer to (2) what makes this property the kind of property it is, the essence of the property, which we would express by the definition of 'ingenerate'. That is, it could name whatever it means to be ingenerate. The relation between these two senses is analogous to that between 'the redness of this shirt' and 'redness'. Dionysius does not include any terms that would specify to what the ingeneracy belongs, which leads us to suspect that he is not thinking of sense (1). To be sure, he has just stated that 'ingenerate' is a predicate of God, but even there it is the curious "ingenerate-itself" (αὐτοαγένητον) rather than the ordinary adjective 'ingenerate'. The assertion that "ingeneracy" is the essence of God is meant to clarify and perhaps strengthen this proposition. I would therefore interpret the antecedent of Dionysius' conditional as follows: If God is ingenerate-itself, (by which I mean not that ingeneracy is a property of him as well, perhaps, as of other things, but rather that the state or property of) ingeneracy is, so to speak, his very essence. I would, then, read his use of the word "ingeneracy" as an example of (2): he is referring to the property of being-ingenerate. This property is nothing less than the essence of ingeneracy; to express this property would entail giving a proper, essential definition of 'ingenerate'.

There are a number of possibilities for what Dionysius means by saying that this definition is God's οὐσία. One common use of this word since Aristotle's *Categories* was to denote the category 'substance', as opposed to the various accidental categories. While there may be some of this sense in Dionysius' use, he does not oppose it to any of the other individual categories, or to the term 'accident' in general. Nor does it seem to mean 'real being', as contrasted with 'becoming', as one finds in Plato's *Timaeus*, for instance. Nor does it have the sense of 'in reality' or 'truthfully', as opposed to 'merely conceptually'. I therefore concur with Christopher Stead, who suggests that "considering that οὐσία, without the article, is likely to be predicate, not subject, it is at least possible, that he means that the *term* ἀγενησία is a true characterization or definition of the Godhead, what Aristotle might have called his λόγος τῆς οὐσίας".[19] Stead is

[18] Simplicius, *in Cael.* (CAG 7: 139.24).

[19] *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1977), 156.

referring to a phrase Aristotle uses in both the *Organon* and the *Metaphysics* to denote the essential account of something's essence. He specifies in his philosophical lexicon, *Metaphysics Δ*, that this λόγος will be a definition.[20]

Combining our analyses of ἀγενησία and οὐσία, then, a curious result follows: Dionysius is equating the *definition* of the term 'ingenerate' with the *definition* of 'God'. Since the latter definition is by itself unclear, we can as it were fill it in with the former, which would be something like 'being from no prior cause'. The argument might be something like this: the definition of God is 'being from no prior cause'; the definition of ingenerate is 'being from no prior cause'; therefore, the definition of God is identical to the definition of ingenerate. The argument follows nicely from the two definitions and the principle of substitution. The problem is that we have no independent reason for believing that 'being from no prior cause' is a good *definition* of God. While Dionysius has reminded us that it is not "permissible" to think of God as having a prior, this does not suffice for making the lack of a prior the essential definition of God. At best, it might imply that this lack of a prior is a proprium of God; that is, it might imply that God is the only being who lacks a prior. If Dionysius were merely refuting the view that matter is ingenerate, this implication would suffice (assuming, as Dionysius goes on to argue, matter and God are distinct).[21] But he is not merely refuting this view: he is in fact defining God such that the Sabellian God who is Father and Son is nonsensical. He is defining God in such a way that necessarily excludes the Son.

[20] *Met. Δ*.8, 1017b21–3: ἔτι τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, οὗ ὁ λόγος ὁρισμός, καὶ τοῦτο οὐσία λέγεται ἑκάστου.

[21] As Peter Widdicombe has noted (*The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, 124, cf. 126, 140–1, 150, 173ff.), part of Dionysius' argument for the impossibility of two ingenerates (God and matter) involves a version of the Third Man Argument: if God and matter were both ingenerate, then one would have to posit a third ingenerate "older and higher than both" to cause the similarity between the two. Presumably, this would usher in a regress. However, Dionysius has a ready answer to the regress: it is not permissible to conceive of God as having a prior; consequently, no regress 'beyond' or 'above' God is even conceivable, (presumably) given what we mean by 'God'. The problem with this answer is that it presumes Dionysius' conclusion to the problem—namely, that God is the only ingenerate, and that the state of being ingenerate is identical with the divine essence.

In Dionysius, we see the strongest identification of ingeneracy with divinity before Aetius and Eunomius. Unlike Justin in the second century and Gregory in the fourth, Dionysius does not think that the term ingenerate only makes sense in connection with the concept of endlessness or incorruptibility. His arguments are ultimately aimed at what he must take to be the inherent contradiction of Sabellian theology: a God who is both unbegotten and begotten at the same level. But he makes this case by proxy: he argues that *matter*, which has a number of qualities opposed to God's qualities, is not co-ingenerate with God. This may be significant for why he focuses on the term ingenerate alone, apart from incorruptible or immortal. The issue of matter's ingeneracy was hot in the late third century: Methodius of Olympus is another example of a Christian author concerned with denying that God and matter are co-ingenerate.[22] Surely, this debate, in addition to the debate with Sabellius, shaped Dionysius' concern with making ingeneracy God's essential attribute. Dionysius' theology was shaped by pressures coming from the areas of cosmology and theodicy. He goes further than any other author before the fourth century in identifying God's essence with ingeneracy. It is likely of some significance that his term is ἀγενησία rather than Aetius' and Eunomius' τὸ ἀγέννητον. And yet, it is clear that the two concepts were not consistently distinguished in Aetius' and Eunomius' writings.

ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA ON SIMPLICITY AND THEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE

The first half of the fourth century witnessed open and prolonged conflict among Christians over the doctrine of God. While it is not

[22] On Methodius, one must begin with L. G. Patterson, *Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1997). For the issue of Methodius and the fourth-century disputes, see L. G. Patterson, 'Origen, Methodius, and the Arian Dispute', *SP* 18 (1982): 912–23; G. Christopher Stead, 'The Platonism of Arius', *JTS* 16 (1964): 16–31 at 28–30; Williams, *Arius*, 168–71, 186–7; Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 29–30, 149; Barnes, *Power of God*, 181–9 (pp. 187–9 discuss Methodius' influence on Eunomius); John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, The Formation of Christian Theology 2.1 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 38–48.

my intention to detail the history of this half-century here, I must characterize in general terms the participants in these debates.[23] It was once held that the entire controversy began with an Alexandrian presbyter named Arius who complained to his bishop, Alexander, about doctrinal matters. This narrative, which was in fact created by the opponents of Arius, has been replaced in modern scholarship with an awareness that Arius was part of larger trends in Christian theology of the time. The immediate trend his theology was conversant with is now commonly labelled 'Eusebian' after its two influential partisans, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea. The latter is particularly interesting for historians since we have such a large body of his writing extant from both before and after the condemnation of Arius at the Council of Nicaea in 325. Eusebius' thought centres on Dionysius' point that we have seen earlier in this chapter, also emphasized strongly by Methodius of Olympus in his response to Origen: there can be only one ingenerate being, God the Father. God the Father generates the Son by will so that he may serve as the 'firstborn of all creation', the first principle of the created order. The Son's derivative status need not imply a total break between himself and God; within the 'Eusebian' camp, a number of ways were developed for expressing the Son's similarity to the Father. For Eusebius of Caesarea, the Son contains, in every way or as a whole, the 'form of God'. Others in the Eusebian trajectory, such as Asterius, described this derivative similarity in terms (rejected by Eusebius of Caesarea) of the Son participating in the Father.[24]

[23] Though much scholarly work remains to be done on the early fourth century, there has been an explosion of scholarly effort on these controversies during the past quarter-century. The interested reader can now consult accounts in the following major English-language monographs: Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea*, chs. 1–5; Rowan Williams, *Arius*; John Behr, *The Nicene Faith, Parts One and Two*, The Formation of Christian Theology 2 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir Seminary Press, 2004); R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005); Sara Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy, 325–345* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Joseph Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1999). For a recent account that points out new complexities among and within the theological parties, see Mark DelCogliano, 'Eusebian Theologies of the Son as the Image of God before 341', *JECS* 14 (2006): 459–84.

[24] See DelCogliano, 'Eusebian Theologies', 462–5.

Despite this diversity on the issue of how the Son's generation from and likeness to the Father is best understood, the Eusebians were united in their emphasis on the uniqueness of the ingenerate God, with its corollary of the Son's existence as a distinct 'hypostasis'.

Another trajectory came to light (though it pre-existed this controversy) in the response to the Eusebians, first by Alexander, archbishop of Alexandria, and later by his successor Athanasius. These theologians emphasized "the *eternally* correlative status of Father and Son".[25] These theologians followed (if unknowingly) Origen's suggestion that the word 'Father', as a term of relation, implies the word 'Son' (daughters received no mention in this context); if God is 'Father' and God is eternal, then God must eternally have a 'Son' to whom he can be Father. The early fourth century witnessed the development of this insight into a theology according to which the relation of Father and Son is what is meant by the word 'God'. This theology is primarily the product of Athanasius. He strongly distinguishes the relation between Father and Son, a relation which is constitutive of the Godhead, from the relation between God and the world. All features of the former relation lie on the divine side of an ultimate metaphysical gap.[26]

For Athanasius, divine immutability and simplicity govern our language for the relationship of Father and Son. In his early polemical works, especially the three *Orations Against the Arians* from around the year 340, Athanasius uses the concept of simplicity to shape his account of the Son's generation from the Father. Athanasius needed an account that would (1) avoid attributing composition to God, which would place God on the created side of the Creator/creation division, while (2) avoiding the separation of Father and Son into distinct levels of being. Eusebius of Caesarea could easily solve (1) by arguing that the Son/Logos in no way inhered in the Father as an accident in a substrate.[27] Rather, for Eusebius, in the divine realm the Son exists on its own. Like Eusebius, Athanasius stresses that the Logos/Son does not introduce composition

[25] Ayres, *Nicaea*, 43.

[26] See Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought* (London: Routledge, 1998).

[27] See esp. *Ecclesiastical Theology* 2.13–14; *Demonstration of the Gospel* 5.1.

into God, but he cannot argue this point on the basis of the separate hypostatic existence of the Logos, as Eusebius does. Rather, for him, it is essential (to good theology as to the basic structure of salvation) that the agent of creation be identical to the agent of redemption, and that this agent be none other than the one power and wisdom of God. That is, the Son is the wisdom by which God is wise.[28] Consequently, to divide the Son from the Father would leave one with an unwise Father, which is absurd.

In order to maintain both (1) and (2), Athanasius employs the scriptural 'examples' (*παραδείγματα*) of the Son as the radiance of God's light and as logos, which Athanasius likens to the possession of logos by the human mind (*νοῦς*).[29] According to Athanasius, God as mind possesses logos in a simple manner; the fact that one can count mind and logos as distinct does not imply that the latter makes the former composite. Athanasius does not think that the divine mind and logos are in any way like the human mind *qua* thinking discrete thoughts and speaking. However, the analogy of rationality proper to the human mind gives Athanasius a way to speak of simplicity amidst diversity. One can no more imagine a mind that lacked reason than one can imagine the Father without his own logos, which is also his own power, wisdom, light, will, and so forth.

Athanasius reiterates this analogical reasoning throughout his career, even in his later work *De decretis*, written most likely in the early 350s.[30] He never abandons it. However, in this later work, as in *De synodis*, a work roughly contemporaneous with *De decretis*, Athanasius employs a new argument based on simplicity that is of great interest for this study. In these works, Athanasius develops a version of the argument that we will see in Eunomius, namely, that if God is simple, then any name truly said of God must name the divine essence. This argument deploys the metaphysical grammar according to which created, composite entities are analysed into their essence or substance (I am using the former in a way indistinct from the latter

[28] See *Ar.* 1.28 (PG 26: 69D).

[29] The method of using such 'examples' is rooted in Origen: see his statement of this methodological principle at *prin.* pref. 10 (SC 252: 88).

[30] *De decretis* 11. The generally accepted date for *De decretis* is now 352/3: see Timothy D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), Appendix 4.

here) and their accidental properties. Any given human is who he or she is not just because of the human essence, but also because of a whole bundle of properties such as hair colour, size, and so forth. Anything that is simple will have no non-essential or accidental properties, since this would make that entity complex.

Before turning to Athanasius' passage, it is important to place his argument in its historical context. In his works of the 350s, Athanasius was for the first time developing a systematic defence of the creed promulgated at Nicaea, and in particular its statements that the Son is "consubstantial" (*ὁμοούσιος*) with the Father and "from the essence of the Father" (*ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός*). The use of *οὐσία* language for God was unpopular with a wide range of bishops in the eastern Mediterranean, who found it inescapably materialistic. In defending the Council's terminology, Athanasius in effect argues that "consubstantial" only gains its intelligibility from its parallel phrase "from the essence of the Father", which in turn is but a way of saying 'from God', that is 'really from God and hence proper to God'.[31] As Lewis Ayres has argued, for Athanasius, the creedal language is a series of ciphers for more fundamental doctrinal principles. To show how *οὐσία* language plays this role, Athanasius uses the argument that divine simplicity implies that proper names of God name God's essence. Hence, they truly name God and not something else, some non-essential property. For Athanasius, with its references to the divine *οὐσία*, the Council is trying to ensure that the language of Father and Son goes to the heart of what Christians mean by God—these are not appendages to a prior divine 'stuff'.

The argument in *De decretis* 22 reads as follows:

So then, if someone thinks that God is composite as (A) accident is in essence, or (B) that he has a certain external covering and is enclosed, or (C) that there are in connection with him certain things that complete his essence, so that when we say 'God' or name him 'Father' we do not signify his invisible and incomprehensible essence, but rather some one of the things connected with him, then let them find fault with the Council's

[31] The polemical intent and argumentation of Athanasius' work from this period has been studied by Lewis Ayres, 'Athanasius' Initial Defense of the Term *Ὁμοούσιος*: Rereading the *De Decretis*', *JECS* 12.3 (2004): 337–59.

stating that the Son is "from the essence of God". But let them consider that they utter the following two blasphemies when they think this way. They introduce a certain corporeal God and falsely assert that the Lord is not Son of the Father himself, but of the things in connection with him. But if God is simple, as he in fact is, it is clear that when we say 'God' and name 'Father', we name nothing as if in connection with him, but signify his essence itself.[32]

The passage as a whole is a disjunction: God is either composite or simple. If God is simple, Athanasius argues, then our names for him name nothing other than his essence. We will become clearer on what Athanasius means by this once we examine his list of three possible implications of the view that God is composite (marked A–C). Option B is a statement of the traditional theme of 'enclosing, but not enclosed'.[33] Athanasius does not develop it and so we can leave it to the side. Options A and C are most interesting in what they reveal about Athanasius' metaphysical grammar. Option A would have divine attributes relate to God as accident to essence. Athanasius is particularly concerned in this passage with the name 'Father'. 'Father' is predicated of humans in the category of relation; it is not part of the definition of humanity to be a father. But Athanasius quite clearly believes that 'Father' is a privileged title for God. It must, then, be an essential title. However, Athanasius goes on to rule out the ordinary way in which essential predicates work, which is view C, as an interpretation of how God is 'Father'. View C refers to the essential complements (*τινα περὶ αὐτὸν τὰ συμπληροῦντα τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ*) that

[32] *De decretis* 22 (ed. H. G. Opitz, *Athanasius Werke* 2/1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1940), 18): *Εἰ μὲν οὖν τὸν θεὸν ἡγεῖταί τις εἶναι σύνθετον ὡς ἐν τῇ οὐσίᾳ τὸ συμβεβηκὸς ἢ ἔξωθέν τινα περιβολὴν ἔχειν καὶ καλύπτεσθαι ἢ εἶναί τινα περὶ αὐτὸν τὰ συμπληροῦντα τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ, ὥστε λέγοντας ἡμᾶς θεὸν ἢ ὀνομάζοντας πατέρα μὴ αὐτὴν τὴν ἀόρατον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκατάληπτον οὐσίαν σημαίνειν, ἀλλά τι τῶν περὶ αὐτόν, μεμφέσθωσαν μὲν τὴν σύνοδον γράψασαν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν υἱόν, κατανοείτωσαν δέ, ὅτι δύο ταῦτα βλασφημοῦσιν οὕτω διανοούμενοι. τόν τε γὰρ θεὸν σωματικόν τινα εἰσάγουσι καὶ τὸν κύριον οὐκ αὐτοῦ τοῦ πατρός, ἀλλὰ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν εἶναι υἱὸν καταψεύδονται. εἰ δὲ ἁπλοῦν τί ἐστιν ὁ θεός, ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ ἔστι, δηλονότι λέγοντες τὸν θεὸν καὶ ὀνομάζοντες τὸν πατέρα οὐδέν τι ὡς περὶ αὐτὸν ὀνομάζομεν, ἀλλ' αὐτὴν τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ σημαίνομεν.*

[33] See William R. Schoedel, 'Enclosing, not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God', in idem and Robert L. Wilken (eds.), *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979), 75–86.

form parts of something's definition.[34] For instance, 'rational' and 'animal' are the essential complements of the essence of humanity, in that they are the parts of the whole that is the *logos* of humanity. 'F completes x's essence' means that x cannot be x without F (and whatever other complements there are for x); removal of any part of something's essence destroys the whole essence. Athanasius, then, is denying both that 'Father' is an accidental predicate of God *and* that it is an essential predicate of God, where the latter is understood in the ordinary sense of a form constituted by its definitional parts, genus and differentia. For late ancient Platonists, only conjunctions of essential properties form true wholes; since accidents only occupy a derivative level of being, they add nothing to the essential core to which they belong.[35] Both kinds of conjunction, however, introduce composition; hence, both fall short of the kind of unity implied by divine simplicity, according to Athanasius. Divine simplicity, then, implies God's transcendence of both accidental and (ordinary) essential predication, for Athanasius.[36]

[34] In fact, in the *Second Oration Against the Arians*, Athanasius had already condemned the view of divine attributes (e.g. wisdom) as essential complements on the grounds that to view them as such would be to view God as composite. His polemic is against Asterius' view that the wisdom of God (with which the Son of God becomes identified solely on account of his salvific role) is (a) ingenerately coexistent with God and (b) is identical with God. He argues that X cannot both coexist with Y and be Y *unless* Y is composite and X is an essential complement of Y. See *Ar.* 2.38 (PG 228C): *Καὶ γὰρ κἀκείνη πάλιν αὐτῶν ἡ διάνοια πῶς οὐ πάνυ μωρὰ, λέγειν τὴν ἀγένητον συνυπάρχουσαν τῷ Θεῷ σοφίαν αὐτὸν εἶναι τὸν Θεόν; Τὸ γὰρ συνυπάρχον οὐχ ἑαυτῷ, τινὶ δὲ συνυπάρχει . . . εἰ μὴ ἄρα σύνθετον εἴποιεν τὸν Θεόν, ἔχοντα συμπεπλεγμένην ἢ συμπληρωτικὴν τῆς οὐσίας ἑαυτοῦ σοφίαν* . . . The term *sumpeplegmenên* ('combined') that is parallel here with *sumplêrôtikên* is the standard term in Aristotle and Porphyry for a complex, as opposed to a simple (*haplous*), statement or proposition. For a parallel theological usage, see Eunomius, *Apology* 11.5.

[35] See Steven K. Strange, 'Plotinus' Treatise 'On the Genera of Being': An Historical and Philosophical Study' (Ph.D. Diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1981), 158–70, esp. 165–7. Athanasius' sources in this passage are obscure. He would not have to be getting the distinction between accidental and essential properties from Platonists, since they in turn got this language from Aristotle. See the use of the notion of essential complements by the third-century Peripatetic commentator Alexander Aphrodisias: *in Metaph.* 205.24; 526.2; *in top.* 38.28; 51.1; 159.6; 446.3. We will discuss Eunomius' and Basil's accounts of essential complements in Chapters 4 and 6.

[36] Most commentators only note the former; if they note anything else, it is B, that God has no external encompassment. See, e.g. Widdicombe, *Fatherhood of God*, 172. I suspect that some (not Widdicombe, so far as I can tell) are misled by Athanasius'

But, at the same time, Athanasius argues that divine simplicity implies that all predication in the case of God is essential predication. Athanasius believes that God is incomprehensible. Yet, he does think he can say certain things about God, which will necessarily be about God's *essence*. He states that, "although it is impossible to comprehend what the essence of God is, nonetheless, if we only understand *that* God is and if scripture signifies him in these names, when we ourselves wish to signify none other than him, we say 'God' and 'Father' and 'Lord'".[37] Because we assume that God is (and 'is' in a way that includes no accidental features), when we use scriptural names like 'God', 'Father' and 'Lord', we can be assured that we are speaking of none other than God.

Athanasius continues by citing two scriptural phrases: "I am he who is" (Ex. 3:14) and the frequent scriptural saying "I am the Lord God". Athanasius says that both of these name the divine essence. The fact that God self-identifies in the former verse simply as the one who *is* leads us to read the second, parallel utterance as similarly a claim about the divine being or essence. And since Athanasius lists Father as a parallel name with Lord, then he must think of it as having a similar referential logic: these terms are names for the divine being. One may be tempted even to construe *ousia* here in existential terms—that is, as 'being' rather than 'essence', as Widdicombe apparently does.[38] However, I do not think this interpretation of *ousia* is justified for this passage. Athanasius is merely arguing that the phrase 'God is Lord' is parallel to 'God is essence (and nothing else)',

statement that the essential complements are *περὶ αὐτόν*: some might read this as suggesting that essential complements are 'around' (i.e. external to) the essence of which they are complements. But the use of *περί* plus accusative to mean something like 'in reference to' or 'in connection with' is perfectly normal in philosophical and non-philosophical Greek: see LSJ, s.v. *περί* C.3 and C.5. For a creative use of this construction in late ancient philosophical theology, see Carlos Steel, ' "Negatio Negationis": Proclus on the Final Lemma of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*', in John J. Cleary (ed.), *Traditions of Platonism: Essays in Honour of John Dillon* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 351–68 at 357–8.

[37] *Decr.* 22 (Opitz, *Werke* 2/1: 18): *κἂν γὰρ καταλαβεῖν ὅ, τί ποτέ ἐστιν ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐσία, μὴ ᾖ δυνατόν, ἀλλὰ μόνον νοοῦντες εἶναι τὸν θεὸν καὶ τῆς γραφῆς ἐν τούτοις αὐτὸν σημαινούσης οὐκ ἄλλον τινὰ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἢ αὐτὸν σημᾶναι θέλοντες λέγομεν θεὸν καὶ πατέρα καὶ κύριον.*

[38] *Fatherhood of God*, 172.

so that, by substitution, ‘Lord’ names the divine essence. Athanasius therefore has in mind predicative being here (x is y), rather than existential being (x exists). While we do not know the variable in ‘the divine essence is x’, we do have reliable substitutions in the terms God, Lord, and Father. This point, which is less than a full-fledged acceptance of the identity thesis, is all Athanasius needs to fulfil his broad argument in *De decretis* that when the Nicene Creed says “from the essence of the Father”, it merely means “from God”.

Athanasius employs a technical metaphysical grammar in order to establish that scriptural language about God as Father and Lord tells us something about the very essence of God, about what it means to be God. And if ‘Father’ is part of what we mean by God, and ‘Father’ necessary implies relation with a ‘Son’, then in fact the relation of Father and Son is part of what we mean by ‘God’. Yet, for Athanasius, this is an utterly incomposite relation. Being God is not other than being Father; hence it is not other than being Father and Son. For Athanasius, here lies the mystery of salvation in Christ; for someone like Eunomius, theological nonsense. Both are agreed that, since in God there is only essence (and this a *simple* essence, not composed of definitional parts), names used of God, in so far as appropriate, name God’s essence and nothing else.

4

“Truly Repay the Debt”: Aetius and Eunomius of Cyzicus

Up to this point, our focus has been broad, spanning Christian literature from the mid-second century to the mid-fourth century. In the remainder of the book, we will focus on a highly specific controversy that spanned less than forty years, from the publication of Aetius' *Syntagmation* in late 359 to the death of Gregory of Nyssa in the mid-390s. This is the controversy between Aetius and Eunomius, on one hand, and Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, on the other. I do not mean to imply that these were the only partisans. A fuller discussion would have to include the role played by Gregory, bishop of Nazianzus and long-time friend of Basil, and others like Didymus the Blind. I simply wish to narrow the focus to those engaged in a demonstrably continuous dialogue.[1]

In traditional accounts, this controversy has been portrayed as simply a manifestation of the broader fourth-century 'Arian' controversy. However, recent accounts have called this narrative into question. The important point for our purposes is that, by the time of Aetius and Eunomius in the late 350s, there was a complex set of doctrinal options; many were both opposed to Nicaea and incompatible with one another. Yet, as Lewis Ayres has argued, the clarity of

[1] With a number of scholars, I am also suspicious of the view that there is a single 'Cappadocian' theology that can be attributed to Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus. The last does not fit exactly with the first two on a number of issues central to the argument of these final chapters.

Aetius' and Eunomius' theology forced a move from confusion and complexity to polarization of more easily identifiable parties.[2]

The new reading of the early fourth century outlined briefly in the previous chapter allows us to separate the controversy between the heterousians—those who viewed the Son as different from the Father in essence—and the pro-Nicene Cappadocians from the earlier phases of the controversy. This is because it insists that the views of earlier 'Eusebians' are not necessarily to be attributed to later opponents of Nicaea like the heterousians or vice versa. Likewise, it insists that the views of earlier 'Nicene' theologians are not necessarily to be attributed to later pro-Nicenes or vice versa. Rather, we can view later groups like the heterousians and the Cappadocians as relatively unique and original, without denying that their theologies were shaped to a large extent by the debates over the nature and activity of the Son—and later, of the Spirit—which began before their time. This is especially important for the question of the knowledge of God, since the anti-Nicene Eunomius stresses the knowability of God, while earlier Eusebian authors like Arius himself had stressed the incomprehensibility of God. In the discussion that follows, I bracket the earlier authors except in cases where they illumine points in the texts of Aetius, Eunomius, Basil, and Gregory, and focus on the positions articulated in these texts themselves.

The principal texts I discuss in this chapter are Aetius' *Syntagmation*[3] and Eunomius' major works, the *Apology* and *Apology for the Apology*.[4] In a very real sense, Aetius was not a participant in the controversy with the Cappadocians. His influence wanes after the Council of Constantinople in 360, which was called by the emperor Constantius, deposed Aetius from the diaconate while propelling his pupil Eunomius to fame and making the latter bishop of Cyzicus.[5]

[2] See Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 144–9.

[3] Critical edition and English translation: Lionel Wickham, 'The *Syntagmation* of Aetius the Anomean', *JTS* 19 (1968): 532–69.

[4] There is also extant a brief confession of faith and some fragments, which I will not discuss.

[5] For widely varying assessments by fifth-century historians of what happened to Aetius at Constantinople, see Philostorgius, *Church History* 4.12 and Theodoret, *Church History* 2.28.7ff (SC 501: 464). Basil mentions the council at *Eun.* 1.2 and Gregory mentions it at *Eun.* 1.82, where he reveals that both he and Basil were

Aetius is significant for this chapter principally as an influence on Eunomius rather than in his own right. Fortunately, we can assess his influence through reading his own words. A convincing case has been made that Aetius' extant *Syntagmation* was written in the late autumn of 359 in response to the Council of Seleucia and to Athanasius' *De Synodis*.[6] We will see some of its principal themes recur in Eunomius' *Apology*, but with more extensive argumentation.

Eunomius' *Apology* was most likely delivered in some form at the time of the Council of Constantinople in January 360 (though it was probably subsequently revised for publication in 360 or 361).[7] This work provoked the three-book response of Basil, *Against Eunomius* in the mid-360s. Eunomius then took a good fifteen years to respond with his five-book[8] *Apology for the Apology*, which is extant only in Gregory of Nyssa's citations of it in his three-book response (and defence of Basil), entitled *Against Eunomius*, which was written in the early 380s. For Basil and Gregory, my account will be supplemented by a number of other texts from their hand, several of which have little or nothing to do with the Eunomian controversy. However, with Aetius and Eunomius, we must rely almost exclusively upon their extant controversial works: 'almost' because two important letters of Basil, numbers 234 and 235, contain a summary of and response to Eunomian teaching. Despite the fact that the discussion of Eunomian teaching in these letters has been framed by a hostile witness, they are nonetheless useful in reconstructing Eunomius' own understanding of simplicity and theological epistemology. Accordingly, these letters will be discussed in the current chapter.

present. For a recent discussion of Basil's role there, see Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 98ff.

[6] Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1979), ch. 4, esp. 226–7.

[7] See Richard Vaggione's introduction to his edition, which I will use for the text of the *Apology*: *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 5–9.

[8] Philostorgius, *Church History* 8.12 (Philip R. Amidon, S.J., trans. *Philostorgius: Church History* (Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 119.).

AETIUS

The basic question with which the *Syntagmation* deals is an odd one: "whether the ingenerate Deity can make the generate ingenerate".[9] Aetius' answer, unsurprisingly, is a strong 'no', though in order to understand this, we must address why he asked the question in this way in the first place and why specifically he believes a generate ingenerate is impossible. As for the first issue, Aetius was most likely responding to Athanasius' *De synodis*, a text that attempted to reclaim the predicate 'ingenerate' for the homoousian or pro-Nicene camp. Aetius responds by framing a question, the one quoted above, that underlines what he takes to be the absurdity in Athanasius' view. Athanasius would have the Son be generate *qua* Son but ingenerate in virtue of being of the essence of the Father or ingenerate God.

The reason why this is impossible for Aetius is that 'ingenerate' names God's essence.[10] But 'generate' is its opposite and names the Son's essence.[11] Now, no essence can be both F and not-F.[12] Therefore, the ingenerate cannot be both ingenerate and generate. Aetius employs a number of arguments to rule out alternative interpretations of 'ingenerate' as a predicate of God. He argues that it is not a "privation" (στέρησις), since privations are posterior to "possessions" (ἕξεις).[13] But this would imply that God was first generate and then deprived of his generate status by becoming ingenerate, which is absurd and violates the basic principle that there is nothing prior to God.

Neither is the title 'ingenerate' the product of human "conceptualization" (ἐπίνοια). Aetius does not go into the detail that Eunomius will on this point. He may not be as concerned with the homoiousian position of Basil of Ancyra as Eunomius would be in his *Apology* of just a few months later. Basil spoke of divine names as giving rise to "notions", though he used the term *ennoia* rather than *epinoia*. Aetius

[9] *Synt.* 1, trans. Wickham, 545; Greek at Wickham, 540: εἰ δυνατόν ἐστι τῷ ἀγεννήτῳ θεῷ τὸ γεννητὸν ἀγέννητον ποιῆσαι.
[10] *Synt.* 16.
[11] *Synt.* 21.
[12] *Synt.* 5; cf. *Synt.* 10.
[13] *Synt.* 19.

could be taking up Athanasius' own polemic against the idea that our terms for God are based on "conceptualization" (*epinoia*), though this is speculative.[14] Whatever the polemical motivation, Aetius' attack on *epinoia* assumes that anything known in this way is invented by the knower. Consequently, if 'ingenerate' is predicated of God by human *epinoia*, then God is indebted to the inventor of the term 'ingenerate' for discovering his true name. This *reductio* assumes that 'ingenerate' is God's true name. None of Aetius' opponents would have disagreed that it is *a* true predicate for God—they would simply have disagreed over how to interpret it.

For Aetius, once one excludes inappropriate interpretations of 'ingenerate', it follows that the term is indicative of God's essence. This implies that the term 'ingenerate', though negative in form, is not a mere negation; it has a real referent. Aetius claims that 'ingenerate' names some real property of God. This is puzzling and, in the form Eunomius gave to it, would attract the ridicule of all three of the Cappadocian Fathers.[15] For them, no negation can define anything. However, in his massive study of the history of late ancient negative theology, Raoul Mortley has claimed that Aetius and Eunomius are actually more philosophically sophisticated on this point than their opponents. Mortley argues that Aetius and Eunomius are witnesses to a development in late Neoplatonism, according to which the highest claim one can make about God is a negation.[16] Mortley bases his claim on a parallel between Aetius' phrase

εἰ τὸ ἀγέννητον οὐσίας ἐστὶ δηλωτικόν . . . ("If ingeneracy is revelatory of essence . . . ")[17]

and the fourth-century Neoplatonist Dexippus' claim in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*

[14] See Athanaius, *Sent.* 23.1.4; *c. Ar.* 1.9; *ep. ad episcopos Aegypti et Libyae* (PG 25: 565, 569).

[15] Basil of Caesarea, *Eun.*1.9; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 28.9; cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Hex.* (PG 44: 92C).

[16] *From Word to Silence*, vol. 2, ch. 8.

[17] *Synt.* 16.

. . . *ἵνα διὰ τῆς ἀποφάσεως αὐτῶν τὴν κυριωτάτην οὐσίαν δηλώσῃ*. ("... in order that by means of the negation of those attributes he might reveal substance in its strictest sense.")[18]

A brief discussion of Dexippus will enable us to assess Mortley's claim of influence. The context of Dexippus' passage reveals that he is not interested here in negative *theology*, but in whether a negation (*ἀπόφασις*) can ever provide a good definition. Specifically, he is dealing with an *aporia* that arises from Aristotle's 'definition' of first substance as "that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject".[19] 'Being said of a subject' and 'in a subject' are the attributes to which Dexippus refers above as being negated. The *aporia* is motivated by the principle (also pointed out by the Cappadocians) that a negation never provides a good definition: one would not define "human being" by saying "neither horse nor dog".[20] But Dexippus says that this principle does not cover all cases. His statement of the exception is elliptical, but the version of the same *aporia* given by Simplicius makes the point clear.[21] Simplicius says that in cases where one knows that a certain number, N, of options exhausts the possibilities, then the negation of N-minus-one of the options suffices to show that the remaining option is the case. So, if the only kinds of things were horses, dogs, and humans, then 'neither horse nor dog' would suffice to define 'human'. While this may seem so counterfactual a situation as to be meaningless, there is a context within which one can be sure that there are only three options. In discussions of value, it can be hypothesized (and was) that the only options are good, bad, and indifferent. If one lays down this premise,

[18] A. Busse, *Dexippi in Aristotelis categorias commentarium* (CAG 4.2), 1–71 at 44. Using Dillon's trans.: Dexippus, *On Aristotle Categories*, trans. John Dillon (London: Duckworth, 1990), 80. Text and translation of this passage with context can also be found at Mortley, *Word to Silence*, 2: 91–2.

[19] *Categories* 2a11ff., 3a7ff.

[20] Dexippus, *in Cat.* 44. It is unclear who the objectors are supposed to be; neither Dexippus nor Simplicius name names. Dillon suggests it is either Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.1.2.15–18, an earlier Platonist objector like Lucius or Nicostratus (cf. *Middle Platonists*, 233–6), or, following P. Henry, oral teaching from Plotinus via Porphyry. In any case, the Cappadocians appear to have some knowledge of this *aporia*.

[21] Simplicius, *in Cat.* 81.15–32. Dillon believes that Simplicius and Dexippus drew on a common source, rather than that Simplicius was drawing on Dexippus directly. If this is true, then Dexippus (confusingly) condensed the original source.

one can satisfactorily define 'indifferent' as 'that which is neither good nor bad'—an example both Dexippus and Simplicius give. Aristotle's definition of substance is an example of this kind of case, since there are only three options for predication relative to a subject: 'being said of a subject' (as 'human being' is said of an individual human being), 'being said in a subject' (as an individual instance of white is in a subject), and being neither (one does not say 'Socrates' of any subject or in any subject).[22] Interpreted in context, Dexippus is claiming that one can define substance in its most proper sense (i.e. first substance) through denying the first two options. Hence, the principle that negations are indefinite is not a universal law.

How close, then, is the parallel with the *Syntagmation*? In the paragraph Mortley cites (*Synt.* 16), there is no disjunctive argument of the sort Dexippus uses (i.e. A or B or C; not A; not B; therefore C). However, there is an argument by elimination in *Synt.* 28:

> If everything originate has been originated by something else and the ingenerate substance (*ὑπόστασις*) has been originated neither by itself nor by another substance, ingeneracy must reveal essence (*οὐσίαν*).[23]

Here as elsewhere in the *Syntagmation*, there is a curious lack of symmetry between argument and conclusion, or rather between the actual (implicit) conclusion of the argument and the expressed conclusion. The expressed conclusion is that ingeneracy (probably 'ingeneracy') reveals essence, or is the essential name of God. But the argument only yields the conclusion that God is not generate. It is the step from this conclusion to the view that 'ingeneracy' defines or expresses the essence of God that is missing. As we will see, Eunomius provides that step and does so precisely by appeal to the doctrine of simplicity. However, as for our present concern with the relation of

[22] Actually, Aristotle earlier (1a29–b3) listed another option: being said both of a subject and in a subject, as, e.g. knowledge is said to be in a subject, the soul, and of a subject, like knowledge of grammar. However, since this is merely a combination of the first two options, it does not invalidate the Neoplatonist reading of the list of options.

[23] Wickham trans., 548; Greek at 543: *Εἰ πᾶν τὸ γεγονὸς ὑφ' ἑτέρου γέγονεν, ἡ δὲ ἀγέννητος ὑπόστασις οὔτε ὑφ' ἑαυτῆς οὔτε ὑφ' ετέρας γέγονεν, ἀνάγκη οὐσίαν δηλοῦν τὸ ἀγέννητον.*

Aetius to Dexippus, I must conclude that, if Aetius is influenced by Dexippus, he does not appear to grasp the precise point made by Dexippus' elliptical remarks about defining first substance through negations. The only argument in Aetius that appears isomorphic to Dexippus' disjunction is thus rather muddled.

Even the verbal parallel Mortley cites is weak; if Aetius drew his claim that "ingeneracy reveals the essence" from Dexippus' claim about negations revealing "substance in its strictest sense (*τὴν κυριωτάτην οὐσίαν*)", he completely misunderstood Dexippus' phrase. Dexippus is not thinking about theology at all, and his claim is entirely unrelated to the development of negative theology in late Platonism. The principle of charitable interpretation requires us to be suspicious, then, of the claim that Aetius is thinking of Dexippus at all.

So we must look elsewhere to make sense of Aetius' claim that the grammatically negative term 'ingeneracy' is not in fact a negation. There are two hints in Aetius' text as to what this means, both of which will be picked up more fully by Eunomius. The first is Aetius' claim in *Syntagmation* 19 that 'ingeneracy' "signifies being".[24] Unfortunately, when we unpack what Aetius means by "being" here, we seem to have a question-begging argument. He phrases his claim as a hypothetical, as he does throughout the *Syntagmation*: "But if ['ingeneracy'] signifies being, who would separate God from being, that is, him from himself?"[25] The problem with the question is that his opponents would be unlikely to grant the antecedent. The antecedent is in fact the disputed claim; he cannot assume it. The second clue in the *Syntagmation* as to why 'ingenerate' is not privative involves an appeal to the principle, drawn from Aristotle's *Categories* (or some

[24] *Synt.* 19 (Wickham, 542): *εἰ δὲ ὂν σημαίνει, τίς ἂν χωρίσειεν ὄντος θεόν, ὅπερ ἐστὶν αὐτὸν ἑαυτοῦ.* "But if ['ingenerate'] signifies being, who would separate God from being, that is, him from himself?" Wickham's translation obscures the identity that Aetius sets up here between God, being, and the *res significata* of 'ingenerate': "If it signifies reality, who would part God in his real being from himself?" (547). My reading of the equivalence of 'being' and 'ingenerate' is given support by Eunomius' discussion of the divine name 'He who is' (Ex. 3:14) at *Apol.* 17.1–2 and perhaps the *Apology for the Apology* [*AA*], apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 3.8.43 (GNO 2: 255.2–3). I discuss these below at pp. 104–5.

[25] See previous note for reference and Greek.

more proximate report), that a privation is a removal of a possession (ἕξις), and so is secondary to the corresponding possession.[26]

Whatever one makes of the force of these arguments, it is not hard to see how the arguments about ingeneracy fit Aetius' broader doctrinal purposes. Aetius attempts to force a dilemma: no thing can be both generate and ingenerate in the same respect. For Aetius, this 'respect' is 'in essence'. That is, he argues that the divine essence is ingenerate and can consequently not be characterized by its opposite.[27] However, we have been unable to make sense of his claim that 'ingeneracy' is the privileged name of the divine essence. Why should we believe God is identical with his ingeneracy? Aetius' inability to articulate this clearly may be related to the fact that he does not use the language of simplicity. Eunomius, by contrast, uses the language of simplicity for precisely this purpose of showing why God's essence and God's essential property of ingeneracy must be identical. Perhaps Aetius had not yet grasped the significance of simplicity language and the identity thesis, and Eunomius' use of simplicity marks a real development in the heterousian school. Or perhaps Aetius made the same point in some lost text: a historically speculative point, but a possibility. In either case, when Eunomius comes to use the language of divine simplicity, he is able to make good on Aetius' goal of forcing a contradiction between God's ingeneracy and the Son's generacy, and thereby necessitating a distinction between the Unbegotten and Begotten at the level of essence.

However, some caution is necessary here. It may appear that I am saying that Aetius and Eunomius have a basic dogmatic goal of subordinating the Son, and that their arguments for this, including Eunomius' appeal to simplicity, are constructed merely in order to justify this dogma. In fact, this interpretation of the relation between

[26] Aristotle, *Cat.* 12a26ff.

[27] It is important to note that Basil and Gregory, whom we might expect to reject Aetius' premises, actually do not. They agree that *in some sense* the divine substance can be called 'ingenerate', though this does not name a real property of it, and is merely a term devised from a human perspective. They also agree that the divine *substance* is not generate: it is not itself characterized by the property of begottenness that characterizes the Son. Their concern for avoiding contradiction is just as great as Aetius; they simply do not believe that there is one between the sense in which we say 'God is ingenerate' and 'the Son is eternally begotten of the Father'.

argument and dogma is precisely what I wish to avoid. In my view, Eunomius does not develop his account of simplicity merely in order to defend Aetius' doctrines or attack those of Basil of Ancyra (and later Basil of Caesarea). Rather, he does so because he thinks that, if this way of understanding God is not correct, then we can in fact have no knowledge of God at all. In other words, it is his *epistemological* concerns that lead him to develop his account of simplicity. To be sure, this account is lacking in Aetius' debating-piece, the *Syntagmation*. Yet, again, we cannot infer that Aetius did not hold these views.

EUNOMIUS

In a 1989 paper, Maurice Wiles asked whether the common scholarly view of Eunomius as merely a "hair-splitting dialectician" was justified, or whether we should view him as a "defender of the accessibility of salvation".[28] Wiles was concerned to avoid the kind of reductionistic reading of Eunomius which opposed his allegedly 'rationalistic' heterodoxy to his opponents' pious and pastoral orthodoxy: for Wiles, even at his most 'dialectical', Eunomius was driven by genuine religious motivations not at all unlike those of his Cappadocian opponents. It would be mistaken to read Wiles as opting for an exclusively soteriological interpretation of Eunomius. Wiles's point, rather, is that Eunomius' syllogistic reasoning serves a purpose beyond itself. To specify this purpose, Wiles quotes Richard Vaggione's unpublished Oxford thesis: "The purpose of [Eunomius'] language was surely not to claim an exhaustive knowledge of reality, but to make a knowledge of reality possible at all by guaranteeing the objective reference of words."[29] Eunomius is not so much trying to map out the divine Reality as to articulate what it means to have any knowledge of this Reality. That is, he is attempting to state a

[28] Maurice Wiles, 'Eunomius: Hair-splitting Dialectician or Defender of the Accessibility of Salvation?', in Rowan Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy*, 157–72.
[29] R. Vaggione, 'Aspects of Faith in the Eunomian Controversy', unpublished Oxford D.Phil. dissertation, 1976, p. 278, quoted in Wiles, 'Eunomius', 164.

theological epistemology, and specifically one oriented towards gaining objective knowledge.

I want to argue two principal theses here: first, that Eunomius' principal concern is, as Vaggione states, with theological epistemology; second, that the doctrine of divine simplicity, as Eunomius understands it, lies at the centre of this epistemology. It gives him the language—which Aetius lacked—necessary for "guaranteeing the objective reference of words", especially the word 'ingenerate'. The connecting link between these two points is the identity thesis, which states that God's essence or substance and God's attributes are identical. For Eunomius, genuine knowledge of something is knowledge of its essence. A theological epistemology will, then, specify whether and in what sense humans can come to know the divine essence. And the doctrine of divine simplicity implies that all true claims made about God are predicated of God's substance (there being no non-substantial or non-essential properties of God). Consequently, the doctrine of simplicity (understood in terms of the identity thesis) allows Eunomius to claim that he does in fact know God in a non-relative, non-subjective manner.

In his *Apology*, Eunomius claims that, "When we call God 'ingenerate', we do not think that we ought to honour him in name alone in accordance with human conceptualization (*epinoia*), but rather that we truly repay the debt to God that is most compulsory of all, namely, the confession that he is what he is."[30] The "debt" which Eunomius believes the term 'ingenerate' fulfils is simultaneously 'religious' and 'epistemological': as the former, acknowledging God as God really is is something we owe as worshippers; as the latter, such an acknowledgement fulfils a basic condition of true knowledge—that it tell us what the object known really is, not merely what we perceive it to be or how it relates to us.

In effect, Eunomius' argument in the *Apology* for why our knowledge of God (via the term 'ingenerate') is knowledge of God's essence is a disjunctive argument: once the unacceptable interpretations of

[30] *Apol.* 8.1–3 (40–2 Vaggione, translations from this work are my own unless noted): *Ἀγέννητον δὲ λέγοντες, οὐκ ὀνόματι μόνον κατ᾽ ἐπίνοιαν ἀνθρωπίνην σεμνύνειν οἰόμεθα δεῖν, ἀποτιννύναι δὲ κατ᾽ ἀλήθειαν τὸ πάντων ἀναγκαιότατον ὄφλημα τῷ θεῷ, τὴν τοῦ εἶναι ὅ ἐστιν ὁμολογίαν.*

this knowledge are eliminated, it follows—so he thinks—that the only remaining alternative is that we know the essence of God. The unacceptable interpretations are that we know God by "conceptualization" (ἐπίνοια), by "privation" (στέρησις), that we know a part of God, that we know a distinct aspect of God, and that we know something co-ordinate with God.[31]

"Neither According to a Conceptualization" (μήτε κατ' ἐπίνοιαν)

Eunomius is clear that humans cannot repay the "debt" owed to God by using names that are conceived of "in accordance with human conceptualization (κατ' ἐπίνοιαν ἀνθρωπίνην)". This phrase is crucial, for Eunomius' polemic against the notion that true knowledge of God can come through 'conceptualization' appears in his *Apology* and is central to his response to Basil of Caesarea, the *Apology for the Apology*. We must, then, determine what 'conceptualization' means for Eunomius and why he finds it so problematic—that is, why he believes names based on conceptualization cannot fulfil the conditions for knowledge, for repaying the 'debt', in theology.

In the earlier work, Eunomius is less than clear about how he understands conceptualization, simply offering the following remark: "Things said according to conceptualization have their being in name alone and in being pronounced, and are of such a nature as to be dissolved along with the sounds that articulate them."[32] Eunomius apparently believes that predicates based on conceptualization have no reality outside of being pronounced. This is strange for at least two reasons. First, it is unnatural to speak of predicates having being at all; Eunomius must mean that the *properties* or *objects* that are indicated by the predicates developed through human conceptualization have no independent reality. This is but one instance of the fundamental confusion of the linguistic and ontological realms in Eunomius. Second, as Basil of Caesarea will

[31] *Apol.* 8.

[32] *Apol.* 8.3–5 (42 Vaggione): τὰ γάρ τοι κατ' ἐπίνοιαν λεγόμενα ἐν ὀνόμασι μόνοις καὶ προφορᾷ τὸ εἶναι ἔχοντα ταῖς φωναῖς συνδιαλύεσθαι πέφυκεν . . .

argue in his work *Against Eunomius*, the claim is manifestly false. Suppose we conceive of something, even something completely false and non-existent, and then utter a term based on this conceptualization. The conceptualization, understood as a notion in the mind, is not dissolved along with the utterance of this term; nor is the term itself, for we can say it again. Even conceptual terms that lack an external referent have a meaning, and this signification remains in the mind.

In fact, Eunomius appears to concede Basil's point, since in his *Apology for the Apology*, he distinguishes two kinds of "things said according to conceptualization". I translate it in outline form for clarity.

Eunomius says that of things said according to conceptualization,

(A) Some have their existence in being pronounced alone, as for instance those which signify nothing, whereas
(B) Others [have an existence] that is in accordance with their proper sense. Of these,
  1 Some are formed by augmentation, e.g. colossal things,
  2 Others by diminishing, e.g. pigmies,
  3 Others by adding, e.g. many-headed creatures, or
  4 Others by combination, e.g. half-beasts.[33]

Eunomius here grants that there are "things said according to conceptualization" which exist beyond their expression. However, the examples are nonetheless all fictional. Each act of conceptualization involves a *manipulation* of an item. This can happen in any of the four ways listed: adding a head to an animal, mixing a beast and a human being, and so forth. Eunomius stresses the aspect of fabrication in each kind of conceptualization. Yet, it is crucial to note just where the fabrication lies (at least sometimes): conceptualization involves taking some basic notion and altering it. These basic notions need not be fictions themselves: they may correspond to something

[33] *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.179 (GNO 1: 276.22–9): *τῶν γὰρ οὕτω κατ᾽ ἐπίνοιαν λεγομένων φησὶ τὰ μὲν κατὰ τὴν προφορὰν ἔχειν μόνην τὴν ὕπαρξιν ὡς τὰ μηδὲν σημαίνοντα, τὰ δὲ κατ᾽ ἰδίαν διάνοιαν· καὶ τούτων τὰ μὲν κατὰ αὔξησιν ὡς ἐπὶ τῶν κολοσσιαίων, τὰ δὲ κατὰ μείωσιν ὡς ἐπὶ τῶν πυγμαίων, τὰ δὲ κατὰ πρόσθεσιν ὡς ἐπὶ τῶν πολυκεφάλων ἢ κατὰ σύνθεσιν ὡς ἐπὶ τῶν μιξοθήρων.*

in reality. This is important because it is clear that, when it comes to the specifically *theological* use of conceptualization, the brunt of Eunomius' argument against them is that they involve a sequence involving a primary notion and secondary reflection upon that notion, whereas true theological claims correspond to their referent who is not subject to an ordering of prior and posterior.[34]

Eunomius makes this point in a passage which Gregory quotes from the *Apology for the Apology.* He criticizes Basil's understanding of *epinoia*:

> Eunomius says that, according to Basil, after the initial concept of a thing has arisen in us, the more subtle and precise investigation of the thought-object is called conceptualization . . . But, Eunomius says, among things for which there is not a primary and a secondary concept and for which no concept is more subtle or precise than another, there is no room for that which is said according to conceptualization.[35]

Eunomius sees that, for Basil, a term formed through conceptualization stands in a complex relationship to an initial concept (*νόημα*): it is *temporally* posterior[36] and yet prior in subtlety and precision. He mentions elsewhere in the *AA* Basil's example of grain: the initial concept of it is simply as grain; the more subtle reflection upon grain, however, reveals a complexity: what initially appeared as merely one thing can be viewed as seed at the time of planting, as a fruit once it has sprouted and grown, and again as nourishment after being harvested and prepared. These ways of conceptually breaking down the idea of grain (seed, fruit, nourishment) add subtlety to our way of thinking about grain; they do not alter grain itself. Eunomius appears to grant, implicitly, that we can think this way about mundane realities like grain and even about the (incarnate) Lord.[37] We cannot do so in the case of the God and Father of the universe.

[34] See Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, 2: 153.

[35] *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.344 (GNO 1: 326.14–22): *εἶπε, φησίν, ὁ Βασίλειος μετὰ τὸ πρῶτον ἐγγενόμενον ἡμῖν περὶ τοῦ πράγματος νόημα τὴν λεπτοτὲραν καὶ ἀκριβεστέραν τοῦ νοηθέντος ἐξέτασιν ἐπίνοιαν λέγεσθαι . . . ὅτι ἐν οἷς οὐκ ἔστι πρῶτον καὶ δεύτερον νόημα οὔτε λεπτότερον ἕτερον ἑτέρου καὶ ἀκριβέστερον, οὐκ ἂν ἔχοι, φησί, χώραν τὸ κατ᾽ ἐπίνοιαν.*

[36] See, e.g., *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.171, 2.552.

[37] See the two (probably originally continuous) fragments: *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.362–3 (GNO 1: 332.7–10, 18–24).

To Eunomius, there are two problems with employing terms that are based on human conceptualization for speech about the Unbegotten God: one is that there is no ordering of priority and posteriority in God; the other is that terms devised through conceptualization name relations between X and the one who invents the terms about X, relations which presumably do not exist between the Unbegotten and human minds. As he says:

> And having said these things [about grain], Basil says that it is not at all unreasonable for the Only-begotten God to admit of diverse conceptualizations on account of the variety of his activities and certain proportions and relations.[38]

He goes on to assert that it is absurd to compare the Unbegotten God to these (i.e. to grain and to the Only-begotten). Implicit here is the premise that (a) variety of activities, (b) proportions, and (c) relations do not obtain in the case of the Unbegotten God, or at least that we do not derive our knowledge of and names for God from these.[39]

One might be wondering how Eunomius thinks humans do gain knowledge of God. In denying that we can know God by *epinoia*, he is not making the claim that we do not or cannot have appropriate theological concepts. Obviously, he believes that the concept of unbegottenness is entirely appropriate. Eunomius is not being inconsistent: he distinguishes between *epinoia* and *ennoia*. The latter term, which I will render as 'notion', is neutral. While the process of conceptualization (*epinoia*) always and necessarily yields fictions

[38] Ibid., lines 18–22: *καὶ ταῦτα εἰπὼν καὶ τὸν μονογενῆ θεὸν οὐδὲν ἀπεικὸς εἶναί φησι διαφόρους δέχεσθαι τὰς ἐπινοίας διά τε τὰς ἑτερότητας τῶν ἐνεργειῶν καὶ ἀναλογίας τινὰς καὶ σχέσεις.*

[39] The latter is suggested by the next fragment Gregory provides: *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.367 (GNO 1: 333.24–6): *ἀλλὰ περὶ τῆς ἀφθαρσίας τοῦ πατρὸς διαλέγεται* [sc. *ὁ Εὐνόμιος*] *ὡς οὐκ ἐξ ἐνεργείας προσούσης αὐτῷ*. "But concerning the incorruptibility of the Father, [Eunomius] contends that it is not present to him on the basis of an activity." However, this passage again shows the confusion of linguistic and ontological realms: of course the divine incorruptibility is not ontologically derived from a divine activity; the question is whether humans have derived this name or other names for God from some divine activity. Consequently, I would not endorse an interpretation of Eunomius according to which he is merely saying that our names for God do not come from divine activities; he is always also arguing that the properties (or property) that these names signify exist by virtue of the divine essence, and not simply by virtue of some divine activity.

when used in theology, human notions (*ennoiai*) about God can be true.[40]

What distinguishes true notions from false ones is their origin. Eunomius justifies his confession of the divine unity by saying that it is "in accordance with the natural notion and the teaching of the Fathers".[41] The phrase "natural notion" invokes the (originally Stoic) theory of natural (*phusikai*) or common (*koinai*) notions. We cannot be certain how much of this theory Eunomius endorses, or what his precise sources are, since it had been taken up by many previous Christian authors. According to the Stoics, those notions that count as 'natural' or 'physical' occupy a privileged status: they (or at least the 'preconceptions' that eventually become articulated as common notions) are implanted by God/nature in the soul. Given their divine origin, they are infallibly correct and function as measuring sticks for human thinking. Or at least they are capable of playing this role in so far as they are properly understood. And one great impediment to such proper understanding is the perverting influence of one's culture and upbringing. Like all humans I *ex hypothesi* have a natural notion of God. For the Stoics, the content of this tells us that God is immortal, blessed, benevolent, caring, and beneficent.[42] However,

[40] e.g. *Apol.* 8.10–11 (42 Vaggione): *τῆς ἀληθοῦς περὶ θεοῦ ἐννοίας καὶ τῆς τελειότητος αὐτοῦ*; ibid. 18.6 (54 Vaggione), where Eunomius speaks favourably of attending to *ταῖς δὲ τῶν ὑποκειμένων ἐννοίαις*; ibid., 22.7–8 (62 Vaggione): Eunomius says that at this point of the argument we have "accurately refined our notion concerning these matters" (*τὴν δὲ περὶ τούτων ἔννοιαν ἀκριβῶς διακαθαίροντας*). The same distinction between *epinoia* and *ennoia* is implicit in Aetius' *Syntagmation*: compare the preface, which claims to be "in accordance with the *notion* of the holy scriptures" (540 Wickham: *κατ' ἔννοιαν τῶν ἁγίων γραφῶν*), with the arguments against the view that 'ingenerate' is the product of *epinoia* in *Synt.* 12. Basil himself distinguishes the two terms similarly, though without devaluing *epinoia* as a process necessarily leading to fictitious results.

[41] *Apol.* 7.1–2 (40 Vaggione): *Εἷς τοίνυν κατά τε φυσικὴν ἔννοιαν καὶ κατὰ τὴν τῶν πατέρων διδασκαλίαν ἡμῖν ὡμολόγηται θεός*. I have not dwelt here on Eunomius' claims to be a traditionalist. One should note that Philostorgius portrays him and Aetius as clearing "the rubble of time" from the church: *Church History*, prol. 1 (Amidon, trans., *Philostorgius*, p. 2). Philip Amidon interestingly links this mission to clear rubble with Eunomius' opposition to the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity: ibid., 80 n. 3. That is, Eunomius objected to certain doctrines that had become traditional by his time because they lacked scriptural warrant in his view.

[42] According to Plutarch, who notes the anti-Epicurean character of the list: *On common conceptions* 1075E (*SVF* 2.1126; = LS 54K). This is at least true of later Stoics,

my culture may have perverted this by teaching me that God is stingy and capricious. Again, we do not know how well Eunomius was acquainted with this theory. He does speak of notions—or rather, terms expressive of meanings—as implanted in human minds by God by a law of divine providence.[43] What is most important is that his theology operates with the same kind of opposition between a natural, unperverted notion and the faulty interpretation of the notion that we find in Stoicism. This opposition is what motivates Eunomius' distinction between true notions and terms based on conceptualization.

Eunomius also lists "the teaching of the Fathers" as a source for his confession, which includes both Christian scripture and tradition.[44] Eunomius assumes that scripture, like our purported natural notion of God, provides unperverted, 'raw' data for the theologian. Eunomius bristles at Origen's notion that the titles Christ applies to himself in John's Gospel (e.g. 'I am the Way') can be thought of as devised by conceptualization. After all, "the Lord attributed these titles to himself"; they are not conceived of through subtle reflection upon an initial, simple concept.[45] What's more, "Who is there among the saints who testifies that these names are said by the Lord in accordance with a conceptualization?"[46] The memory of Origen be damned (or at least dimmed): the titles Jesus applies to himself are not mere conceptualizations and no one has ever claimed otherwise. For Eunomius, scripture does not deal in the vagaries of conceptual thought. His strong theology

since the early Stoa did not tend to speak of theological natural notions: see Matt Jackson-McCabe, 'The Stoic Theory of Implanted Preconceptions', *Phronesis* 49 (2004): 323–47.

[43] *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.546, 2.548. There is abundant literature on the role of this opposition between 'by nature' (*φύσει*) and 'by convention' (*θέσει*) in the Eunomian controversy. See Jean Daniélou, 'Eunome l'Arien et l'exégèse néo-platonicienne du Cratyle', *Revue des Études Grecques* 49 (1956): 412–32; Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, 2: 146–59.

[44] Vaggione discusses (far too dismissively) the appeals to scripture and natural notions as criteria by Eunomius, his partisans, and his opponents at *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79ff.

[45] Eunomius, *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.351 (GNO 1: 328.21–2): . . . *ἑαυτῷ ταύτας ἐπέθηκε τὰς προσηγορίας ὁ κύριος* . . .

[46] Ibid. apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.295 (GNO 1: 313.16–18): *τίς, φησί* [sc. *ὁ Εὐνόμιος*], *τῶν ἁγίων ἐστὶν ὃς κατ' ἐπίνοιαν λέγεσθαι τῷ κυρίῳ ταῦτα μαρτυρεῖ τὰ ὀνόματα.*

of revelation lies behind his assertion that to think that theology is based upon conceptualization is tantamount to an 'Aristotelian' denial that divine providence extends to the sublunary realm.[47] By claiming that our names for God are human constructs, one is denying God's ability to reveal his true name and hence his true being.

To summarize, Eunomius' polemic against conceptualization centres on his belief that this process involves a secondary manipulation of more basic knowledge. But in the case of God, there is no prior or posterior, and hence genuine knowledge about God cannot involve prior or posterior elements. Moreover, we have perfectly adequate sources for ideas in theology: natural notions and scripture (both of which count as 'revelation').

"Nor by Privation" (μήτε κατὰ στέρησιν)

In addition to denying that the term 'unbegotten' is based on human conceptualization, Eunomius argues that it is not a privative term, as we have seen in Aetius. Eunomius' explicit argument is closely parallel to Aetius': privations come from removing prior possessions; but no such order can exist in God; therefore no privations exist in God, from which it follows that God's ingeneracy is not a privation. But this is as unsatisfying as it was in Aetius, since it assumes what it is trying to prove, namely, that ingeneracy is a positive ontological property and not merely a mental negation.

Eunomius' denial of privation is ultimately based on his understanding of God as pure or true Being.[48] This is based on Exodus 3:14, which (in the LXX) proclaims the divine name as 'the one who is' (ὁ ὤν). We can infer from a passage in the *Apology* that this name is synonymous with 'ingenerate'. There, Eunomius divides names for

[47] Ibid. apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.411.

[48] There is a very interesting passage that argues this point in the *AA* (apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 3.8.34). Here, Eunomius contrasts the Father who is ὁ ὤν with the Son, who does not have being "in the proper sense" (κυρίως) or "without qualification" (ἁπλῶς: cf. 3.8.36; I assume this was left out of the original quotation at 3.8.34). He grounds this distinction on the fact that the Son is said to be "in the bosom" of the first principle, to be "with God", to be "in the beginning", and so forth, whereas the Father is said (in Exodus 3:14) to have being *simpliciter.*

God into two classes. On one hand are names like 'father' and 'eye', which are used of both humans and God in scripture, but have completely different meanings in the two cases.[49] Moreover, their meanings are not convertible when they are applied to God: when we say 'God is Father', we mean a divine activity of causing the Son; God's 'eye' "means sometimes God's care and protection of the righteous, sometimes his knowledge of events".[50] On the other hand are names like 'the one who is' (*ὤν*) and 'only true God' (*μόνος ἀληθινὸς θεός*), which are synonyms.[51] As he argues elsewhere in the *Apology* and in the *Apology for the Apology*, 'ingenerate' is synonymous with every other title applied to the first principle.[52] In fact, as we will see, this synonymy principle is implied by Eunomius' understanding of simplicity and the identity thesis.

The important point for our purposes is that, if 'ingenerate' is synonymous with 'being', and ingeneracy is identical ontologically with being, then 'ingenerate' is not a negative or privative term and does not name an ontological privation in God. God's ingeneracy is the same thing as God's being. Consequently, when we call God ingenerate, we are doing nothing different from saying that God exists.

Other Improper Interpretations of Ingeneracy

Eunomius proceeds to rule out three additional faulty ways of understanding divine ingeneracy.[53] While he provides separate arguments against the first two ways of taking it (as a product of conceptualization, as a privation), he dismisses the final three interpretations with curt statements of rather simple arguments. The arguments are

[49] *Apol.* 16.10–12 (52 Vaggione): *τῶν ὀνομάτων τὰ μὲν κατὰ τὴν ἐκφώνησιν καὶ προφορὰν τὴν κοινωνίαν ἔχει μόνον, οὐκ ἔτι δὲ κατὰ τὴν σημασίαν.*

[50] *Apol.* 16.13–14 (53 Vaggione).

[51] *Apol.* 17.1–2 (54 Vaggione): *τὰ δὲ πολλὰ κατὰ τὴν ἐκφώνησιν κεχωρισμένα τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει σημασίαν.* [This is the *δέ* clause answering the *μέν* clause quoted in note 49.]

[52] *Apol.* 19; *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.471, 2.555.

[53] *Apol.* 8.15–17 (42 Vaggione): *μήτε ἐν μέρει τὸ ἀγέννητον (ἀμερὴς γάρ), μήτε ἐν αὐτῷ ὡς ἕτερον (ἁπλοῦς γὰρ καὶ ἀσύνθετος), μήτε παρ᾽ αὐτον ἕτερον (εἷς γὰρ καὶ μόνος αὐτός ἐστιν ἀγέννητος).*

perfectly valid, but suffer once more from treating ingeneracy as a real, positive property: again, the point Eunomius has set out to establish. The arguments are nonetheless of interest for our purposes, since two of them appeal to divine simplicity. The arguments can be stated as follows.

(1a) God is partless.
(1b) 1a implies that, if God is X, God is X not in some part only and/or God's X-ness is not itself a part.
(1c) God is ingenerate.
(1d) It follows that God is not ingenerate only in some part and that God's ingeneracy is not itself a part.

(2a) God is simple and incomposite.
(2b) 2a implies that, if God is X, the property of X-ness is not in God as something distinct.
(2c) God is ingenerate.
(2d) It follows that the property of ingeneracy is not in God as something distinct.

(3a) God is the only ingenerate being.
(3b) 3a implies that if God is X, God's X-ness does not exist as something separate from and co-ordinate with him.
(3c) God is ingenerate.
(3d) It follows that God's ingeneracy does not exist separate from and co-ordinate with God.

These arguments complete the disjunction by appealing to God's partlessness, simplicity, and uniqueness. It is not clear on what grounds Eunomius distinguishes partlessness and simplicity.[54] Yet, to deny that properties belong to God as parts or as distinct elements is to deny that God has three kinds of properties: bodily members,

[54] Basil is puzzled by this as well: *Eun.*1.11.14–18 (SC 299: 208): *’Έπειτα μέντοι κἀκείνῳ προσέχειν ἄξιον ὅτι τὸ ἀμερὲς καὶ τὸ ἁπλοῦν, ταὐτὸν ὑπάρχον κατὰ τὴν ἔννοιαν – ἀμερές τε γάρ ἐστι τὸ μὴ ἐκ μερῶν συγκείμενον, καὶ ἁπλοῦν ὡσαύτως τὸ μὴ ἐκ πλειόνων ἔχον τὴν σύστασιν —, οὗτος* [sc. *ὁ Εὐνόμιος*] *ὡς διαφέροντα τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ διίστησιν ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων.*

accidental attributes, and 'essential complements'. We have seen in the previous chapter that Athanasius was concerned with the latter; it is clear from Eunomius' *Apology for the Apology* that Eunomius was as well.

There, he argues that Basil's theology, which involves the attribution of multiple, distinct concepts to God, necessarily renders God's essence composite. As Gregory reports it, "Eunomius says that [God] will no longer be construed by us [i.e. Basil and Gregory] as simple, since he participates in the concepts signified through each title and since he completes his own perfection in being through participation in them."[55] If God becomes what God is by being X, Y, and Z, then God's essence is composed by participation in these qualities. And this clearly violates divine simplicity, since there will be God's essence and God's participated qualities.

So then, when Eunomius completes his argument by elimination, he has not only ruled out the view that 'ingenerate' is a non-essential name of God. He has also ruled out the view that it is one of many distinct titles of God's essence. This cannot be because such names would be distinct not only from one another but also from God, and hence ruin divine simplicity. Rather, 'ingenerate' must refer to the one essential property that is identical with God's essence. That is, it *must* do so if the disjunctive argument has truly dealt with and eliminated all possible alternatives.

However, as Basil and Gregory argue, it has not. It rests on an overly simplistic dichotomy between knowing something's essence or substance and knowing it otherwise, that is, knowing it *per accidens*. In reply, Basil and Gregory seize upon a 'category' that as it were 'splits the difference' between these two kinds of knowledge. They construe the positive divine attributes, such as light, life, and goodness, as *propria*, that is properties co-extensive with and intrinsic to the divine essence, but not individually definitive of that essence. They are neither accidents nor essential complements nor synonyms, and yet they *do* render knowledge of the divine substance,

[55] *Eun.* 2.499 (GNO 1: 371–2): *φησὶ μηκέτ᾽ αὐτὸν παρ᾽ ἡμῶν ἁπλοῦν εἶναι κατασκευάζεσθαι ὡς μεταλαμβάνοντα τῶν νοημάτῶν τῶν δι᾽ ἑκάστης προσηγορίας σημαινομένων καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐκείνων μετουσίας συμπληροῦντα ἑαυτῷ τὴν κατὰ τὸ εἶναι τελείωσιν.*

albeit incomplete knowledge. The question is whether they render *enough* knowledge, or knowledge of the right *kind*, to satisfy the 'debt', as Eunomius understands it.

For Eunomius, in order to pay this debt, we must know God as God really is, that is, we must know the divine essence. And the conclusion of the argument by elimination we have gone through is that ingeneracy provides us with this knowledge: "ingeneracy must be ingenerate essence".[56] Let us turn to how Eunomius positively understands the divine essence and human knowledge of it.

Knowing the Divine Essence

The Modified 'Priority of Definition' Principle

The key premise that is implicit in the disjunctive argument we have just examined is that the only thing that can be known about a simple being is its essence. Consequently, the only way to repay the debt will be to know its essence. This is a modified version of the principle of the priority of definition: the idea that knowing *what* something is, its essence, is prior to knowing anything else about it. In the Eunomian theological version, it is not so much the *priority* of knowing what as the *exclusivity* of knowing what. This is a significant modification: it is not that one needs to know God's essence in order to know other things about God. Rather, God's essence is all there is to know.

It should be noted, however, that the Eunomian position only requires the principle to hold in the case of simple objects of thought such as God; it would not need to hold for mundane realities. The principle appears most clearly in two letters of Basil which summarize

[56] *Apol.* 8.17–18 (42 Vaggione): *αὐτὸ αὖ εἴη οὐσία ἀγέννητος*. It is important to note (a) that this establishes the status of the divine 'ingeneracy' (*τὸ ἀγέννητον* being the most likely antecedent of *αὐτό*), and (b) that the argument of *Apol.* 7 concludes that "*God* must be ingenerate essence" (40 Vaggione: *αὐτός ἐστιν οὐσία ἀγέννητος*). I take it that these are distinct conclusions that yield by transitivity a third conclusion (c) God = ingeneracy = ingenerate essence. In other words, Eunomius first argues that *God* is ingenerate essence, then that *ingeneracy* must be taken as ingenerate essence (rather than as a conceptual, privative, or accidental property). This accounts for the apparent repetition in *Apol.* 7–8, and for the gender of the pronouns in the conclusions of each argument.

and respond to Eunomian epistemology: *Letters* 234 and 235.[57] We will have occasion to discuss the position Basil sets forth in these crucial letters in the next chapter. For present purposes, we need to examine the position he opposes.

Letter 234 opens with a question, "Do you worship what you know or what you do not know?"[58] The question is put to Basil by Amphilochius, recently made bishop of Iconium and an ally of Basil. Amphilochius appears to have been wrestling with the teachings of Eunomius, or perhaps someone in his school. It has been suggested that the Eunomians seized upon this theological neophyte as a potential convert.[59] Basil treats the questions Amphilochius has raised as coming from a Eunomian source.

First we need to ascertain why the Eunomians would have phrased the initial question of *Letter* 234 as they did. The question attempts to generate a dilemma which will force Amphilochius to concede that, since he does not know God's essence, he does not know the God whom he worships *at all*. The premise is the principle of the priority—or *exclusivity*—of definition, which is stated explicitly: "But, [the imagined opponent] says, God is simple, and everything one might enumerate as knowable about him belongs to his essence."[60] It follows that "if you do not know the essence of God, you do not know him"[61] and that "if you do not know the essence of God, you worship what you do not know".[62]

The principle leaves Amphilochius with stark alternatives: knowing God's essence or not knowing God at all. Eunomius believes that

[57] The letters are conventionally dated to January 376. This would place them well after Basil's *Against Eunomius* and before Eunomius' *Apology for the Apology*, which was not published until after Basil's death in 379.

[58] *Ep.* 234.1.1 (3: 41 Courtonne): *Ὃ οἶδας σέβεις, ἢ ἀγνοεῖς*

[59] Kopecek, *History of Neo-Arianism* 2: 431–2; Hanson, *The Search*, 617. Basil's response to Amphilochius comprises five letters (Basil, *epp.* 232–6). *Letters* 233–6 may originally have been a single "memorandum" (*ὑπομνηστικόν*), later divided by the various questions answered. Basil refers to such a memorandum at the end of *ep.* 232 (3: 39 Courtonne).

[60] *Ep.* 234.1.13–14 (3: 42 Courtonne): *Ἀλλ' ἁπλοῦς, φησίν, ὁ Θεός, καὶ πᾶν ὅπερ ἂν αὐτοῦ ἀπαριθμήσῃ γνωστὸν τῆς οὐσίας ἐστί.*

[61] *Ep.* 234.2.1 (3: 43 Courtonne): *Ἀλλ' εἰ τὴν οὐσίαν, φησίν, ἀγνοεῖς, αὐτὸν ἀγνοεῖς.*

[62] *Ep.* 234.2.7–8 (3: 43 Courtonne): *εἰ τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀγνοεῖς, ὃ μὴ γινώσκεις σέβεις.*

he does have essential knowledge of God. Hence, he is able to repay the debt of confessing God as he is. The crux of Basil's response to Eunomius is simply to deny the validity of the principle.

The Identity Thesis and the Synonymity Principle

Eunomius holds that, in God, ingeneracy and essence are identical. But what about all the other titles scripture applies to God? We know that they cannot be based on mere fancy or conceptualization, if they are to be true, and that they cannot name any other 'part' of God, since there aren't any parts. What about terms like 'light', 'life' and 'power'? The problem is especially pressing since scripture applies these to both the Father and the Son. Eunomius tackles this set of issues in a passage from the *Apology* with what I will call the synonymity principle. He first imagines an objection:

> But perhaps someone who has been goaded by all this into responding will say, "Even granting the necessity of paying attention to the names and of being brought by them to the notions of the underlying realities, still, by the same token that we say that the ingenerate is different from the generate, we also say that 'light' and 'light', 'life' and 'life', 'power' and 'power' are alike with respect to both."[63]

Note that the problem is created by the identity thesis. If terms lead us to underlying realities, then different terms should lead us to different underlying realities. But scripture applies the same terms to different realities, Father and Son.

> Our response, then, to such a person is to say that the one 'light' is ingenerate and the other generate. When spoken of the Ingenerate, does 'light' signify an entity other than that signified by 'the Ingenerate', or does each word signify the same entity? If there are two separate entities, then it is obvious that the thing made up of these entities is also composite, and what is composite is not ingenerate! On the other hand, if both words signify the same entity, then, just as the ingenerate differs from the generate, so 'the

[63] Eunomius, *Apol.* 19.1–4 (56 Vaggione; trans. Vaggione, altered for consistency): *Εἴποι δ᾽ ἄν τις ἴσως πρὸς ἀντιλογίαν ἠκονημένος, ὡς εἴπερ δεῖ τοῖς ὀνόμασι προσέχειν καὶ διὰ τούτων προσάγεσθαι ταῖς τῶν ὑποκειμένων ἐννοίαις, καθὸ μὲν ἀγέννητον καὶ γεννητὸν παρηλλάχθαι φαμέν, καθὸ δὲ φῶς καὶ φῶς, ζωή τε καὶ ζωή, δύναμις καὶ δύναμις ἐοικέναι.*

light' must differ from 'the light', and 'the life' from 'the life', and 'the power' from 'the power' . . . If, then, every word used to signify the essence of the Father is equivalent in force of meaning to 'the Ingenerate' because the Father is without parts and uncomposed, by the same token that same word used of the Only-begotten is equivalent to 'offspring'.[64]

For Eunomius, if God is simple, then titles we apply to God "signify" (*σημαίνειν*) the single entity that God is. This verb clearly does the work in this passage of both 'sense' and 'reference'. This is why all the terms applied to a single simple entity must be synonymous: identity of reference guarantees identity of sense (*ἴσον . . . κατὰ τὴν τῆς σημασίας δύναμιν*). So, 'light' not only refers to the same entity as 'ingenerate', it also means the same thing. But, when used of the Son, it means 'generate'. Interestingly, Eunomius assumes that the Son is simple.

In a passage from the *Apology for the Apology*, Eunomius makes explicit that he is speaking of both semantic and ontological identity. Here he is discussing incorruptibility and ingeneracy as terms predicated of the divine life. "For . . . it is impossible for the life [of God] to be one, while the account of incorruptibility and the account of ingeneracy are not identical."[65] If these terms are not *semantically* identical, there will be, as it were, one half of the divine life that is ingenerate and another that is incorruptible. Of course, this is absurd; but of course it is even more absurd to think that there is a potential problem of semantically diverse terms splitting their referent in the first place. Basil's and Gregory's strong reaction against the identity thesis, as presented by Eunomius, is explained to a large

[64] *Apol.* 19.4–19 (56–8 Vaggione; trans. Vaggione, altered for consistency): *πρὸς ὅν φαμεν . . . ὅτι τὸ μέν ἐστιν ἀγέννητον φῶς, τὸ δὲ γεννητόν. πότερον ἄλλο τι σημαίνει τὸ φῶς ἐπ᾽ ἀγεννήτου λεγόμενον παρὰ τὸ <ἀ>γέννητον, ἢ ταὐτὸν ἑκάτερον; εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἕτερόν τι καὶ ἕτερον, εὔδηλον ὅτι καὶ σύνθετον τὸ ἐξ ἑτέρου καὶ ἑτέρου σύγκειμενον, τὸ δὲ σύνθετον οὐκ ἀγέννητον· εἰ δὲ ταὐτόν, ὅσον παρήλλακται τὸ ἀγέννητον πρὸς τὸ γεννητόν, τοσοῦτον παρηλλάχθαι δεῖ καὶ τὸ φῶς πρὸς τὸ φῶς καὶ τὴν ζωὴν πρὸς τὴν ζωὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν πρὸς τὴν δύναμιν . . . εἰ τοίνυν πᾶν ὅπερ λέγεται τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας σημαντικόν, ἴσον ἐστὶ κατὰ τὴν τῆς σημασίας δύναμιν τῷ ἀγεννήτῳ διὰ τὸ ἀμερὲς καὶ ἀσύνθετον, κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον κἀπὶ τοῦ μονογενοῦς αὐτὸ{ν} τῷ γεννήματι.*

[65] Eunomius, *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.471 (GNO 1: 364.5–8): *οὐ γὰρ δυνατόν, φησί, τὴν μὲν ζωὴν εἶναι μίαν, τὸν δὲ τοῦ ἀφθάρτου λόγον μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι τῷ τοῦ ἀγεννήτου λόγῳ.*

extent because of its connection in his thought with the synonymity principle. For them, the reductionism of this principle kills the necessary variety of religious language. It also makes nonsense of religious language. One wonders how they would have reacted to a version of the identity thesis that did not include this claim. In Eunomius we are dealing with a hyper-realism, by which I mean a view that language and concepts map directly onto the ontological sphere to such an extent that semantic diversity by itself implies ontological diversity. It would be easy to assume that Basil and Gregory's response will be to embrace a totally negative theology as we have seen in Clement or to abandon realism, especially since their response includes a rehabilitation of the category of "conceptualization", in which they accord a significant, positive role to seemingly non-referential human mental constructs. But this is not the whole story, since they also claim to be in possession of a set of terms that do in some sense refer to God as God really is (and not merely to our concepts of God). How they can claim this without falling into Eunomius' identity thesis or abandoning the concept of divine simplicity is the subject of the final three chapters.

For Eunomius, the doctrine of simplicity functioned to ensure the objective nature of knowledge of God. Because God has no non-essential properties, in so far as we know God, we know God's very essence. The standards of knowledge, again, are high: they involve knowing a thing's essence. The Cappadocians deny that such knowledge is possible. They are, consequently, faced with the task of articulating a coherent theological epistemology that does not include knowledge of God's essence.

5

Basil of Caesarea I: On Not Knowing God's Essence (But Still Knowing God)

In contrast to Eunomius' claim that we know but one property of God, which is identical with his essence, Basil maintains that knowledge of God has a rich complexity, including what we would call 'moral' knowledge gained through the practices of asceticism. For Basil, this richness is in no way in conflict with divine simplicity. This chapter will be devoted to Basil's anti-Eunomian theological epistemology.[1] Here, I will outline what Basil thinks we know of God and how we know it. I attend particularly to Basil's concern to articulate how humans can have meaningful knowledge of God that is not knowledge of God's essence. I will argue that most of this represents a negative doctrine of simplicity, that is, an account of what simplicity does *not* imply: it does not imply the identity thesis. Only in the second part of the next chapter will we examine Basil's positive doctrine of simplicity. In the current chapter, we will see how Basil articulates his negative doctrine through a series of distinctions: these are meant to tell us what we do and do not know about God; and how different things we say about God function differently. The contrast is sharp with the Eunomian reduction of all true claims about God to synonyms.

The final three chapters principally deal with the ways in which Basil and Gregory articulate a view of theological epistemology that is neither Eunomian nor totally apophatic as in Clement and yet still retain the language of divine simplicity. Trinitarian questions will arise at various points throughout the following chapters, as it is

[1] Unquestionably the best biography of Basil in English is Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).

necessary to gaining a full picture of how Basil and Gregory use the language of simplicity. Yet, I confess at the outset that my treatment of the development of their thought on the Trinity is less complete than is my treatment of their views on the knowledge of God.[2]

For Aetius and Eunomius, the only way theology can be meaningful is if the ontology of simple divine being is perfectly reflected in our speech about it. Words for God cannot be privative because there is no privation in God. Different names reveal distinct essences. The linguistic realm is a direct map of the ontological. In order to refute them, Basil cannot merely dwell on doctrinal differences, but must engage head-on the assumption of a one-to-one correspondence between theological language and the being of God. Yet—and this is crucial—he must do so while preserving the meaningfulness of theological discourse. That is, he must articulate a median position, not recognized by Aetius and Eunomius, between direct correspondence and hence comprehensibility on the one hand, and pure agnosticism or equivocation on the other. For, if he falls into the latter, then he will be unable to retain the logical validity of theological statements. 'God is light' will have the force of any and every other claim where we do not know the meaning of the terms we are using, an implication that neither Basil nor Gregory of Nyssa wishes to embrace.

A CENTRAL TENSION: 'COMMON USAGE' AND PURIFICATION

To this end, Basil articulates a key principle, which has by and large been neglected in scholarship on his theology.[3] It is that certain

[2] I happily refer the reader interested in the full range of Basil's and Gregory's Trinitarian thought to the following works: Ayres, *Nicaea*, chs. 8, 11–14; Barnes, *Power of God*, chs. 6–7; Stephen M. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2007); Volker Henning Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: Sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neonizäner* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); Hanson, *The Search*, ch. 21.

[3] The exceptions come in one article on Basil and a book on Eunomius: David G. Robertson, 'Relatives in Basil of Caesarea', *SP* 37 (2001): 277–87 at 279–80 and n. 11;

logical principles and meanings of terms are fixed in such a way that the "common usage" (κοινὴ συνήθεια) of them applies to both mundane and divine realities.[4] By "common usage", Basil means the understanding of these terms in what he takes to be the philosophical *koinê*. This seems especially to include discussions of the categories and basic logical principles. Basil argues that this way of understanding concepts, terms, and principles like categorical classification holds both for speaking about mundane realities and for speaking about God.

For instance, the logic of the category of relation applies to God in the same way that it applies to relations among sensible objects. Basil anticipates an objection: doesn't this diminish God's glory? The objection, as stated, sounds merely pious, but could also reflect a key principle of Neoplatonist metaphysics: the categories governing the sensible world are not applicable to the intelligible, divine realm.[5] In fact, Plotinus held that of Aristotle's ten categories, the nine non-substance categories, including relation, only apply within the sensible world, and substance in the sensible world is only analogically related to true substance in the intelligible.[6] In contrast to this view

Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*, 265. I owe a great deal to Robertson's article in this section.

4 The phrase appears at *Eun.* 2.10.29–30 (SC 305: 40); the principle appears at lines 21–3. The synonymous phrase κοινὴ χρήσις occurs frequently. It is, for instance, part of Basil's famous account of 'conceptualization' (*epinoia*) at *Eun.* 1.6–8 (see 1.6.22 and Sesboüé's note at SC 299: 185 n.2); cf. 1.8.33. 'Common usage' with either *khrêsis* or *sunêtheia* refers to philosophical or customary usage of a term as contrasted with scriptural usage of the same term (even if the two mean the same by it). (*Pace* Philip Rousseau's interpretation at *Basil of Caesarea*, 323.) There are no instances in Basil's *Contra Eunomium* where 'common usage' and scriptural usage are opposed in their understandings, nor are there instances where Basil correlates Eunomius' view with the view of a term current in the 'common usage'. 'Common usage' is always on Basil's side in *Eun.*: see the passages listed in Sesboüé's Index Locorum, s.v. συνήθεια and χρῆσις. The implication is that Eunomius knows neither his Bible nor his dictionary!

5 For discussion, see Steven K. Strange, 'Plotinus, Porphyry, and the Neoplatonic Interpretation of the Categories', *ANRW* 2.36.2 (1987), 955–74; idem, 'Plotinus' Treatise "On the Genera of Being"': An Historical and Philosophical study' (Ph. D. Diss., University of texas at Austin, 1981).

6 Ibid. Brief summaries of these views can be found in Dexippus, *in Cat.* 2.2 and 2.4 (40ff. Busse; 74–5, 77–8 Dillon). Although Aristotle's non-substance categories do not exist in the intelligible world, for Plotinus, the *megista genê* of Plato's *Sophist* do: being, sameness, difference, motion, and rest. Simplicius states that the first four

(of which Basil may or may not have been aware),[7] Basil holds that the category of relation, understood in the same way as we understand it here below, applies to language about God. Consequently, the relative terms 'Father' and 'Son' and the relation they imply are predicated of God in a way that is neither metaphorical nor catachrestic, as Basil accused Eunomius of teaching.[8]

My point here is not to dwell on relatives *per se* (I return to relatives in discussion of distinction (2) below), but to highlight Robertson's insightful observation that Basil defends the "common usage" of concepts like relation in the case of God.[9] In fact, this notion is central to Basil's approach to language and meaning throughout the *Contra Eunomium*: meanings of terms are fixed by their ordinary sense. Hence Eunomius' claim that terms like 'light' and 'life' are synonymous in the case of God strikes Basil as absurd. If they are distinct in meaning in their ordinary use, so too must they be when used in scripture and in theological reflection upon scriptural language. For Eunomius, language and logic operate entirely differently in the case of simple and non-simple reality. Only because God is simple is the commonsense account of terms like 'light' and 'life' nullified. Basil has a direct response to this: there being no direct

categories (substance, relation, quantity, and quality) all belong to both incorporeals and corporeals, while the remaining categories only apply to corporeals: see *in Cat.* (295.24–296.1 Kalbfleisch; trans. Gaskin, 20).

7 On Basil's knowledge of Neoplatonism, see John M. Rist, 'Basil's "Neoplatonism": Its Background and Nature', in Paul J. Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), vol. 1, 137–220. Rist does not, however, discuss the Neoplatonic interpretation of the categories.

8 *Eun.* 2.23.41–3; Robertson, 'Relatives', 285–6.

9 Robertson, 'Relatives', 278, where he argues that the relative property of 'being a father' characterizes a class that includes both God and human fathers. One should compare Stead's comments on the importance of the class/genus distinction with respect to the category of substance at *Divine Substance*, 271–2. A similar distinction should be made for relation. In fact, it seems implicit in Basil's response to the imagined objection at *Eun.* 2.10.25–7: "For the difference between the Son and other things does not consist in relation [i.e. relation is common to both: see previous sentence]; rather, the superiority of God to mortals manifests itself in what is proper to his essence." SC 305: 40: *Οὐ γὰρ ἐν τῷ πρὸς τί πως ἔχειν ἡ διαφορὰ τῷ Υἱῷ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ ἰδιότητι τῆς οὐσίας ἡ ὑπεροχὴ τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὰ θνητὰ διαφαίνεται.* That is, just because we speak of both in the language of relation does not make them the same in kind or essence.

correspondence between the linguistic and ontological spheres,[10] no problem arises with holding that the same linguistic and logical principles hold in the case of both simples and the non-simple entities with which we are more familiar. If we call God 'Father', the term no less implies an offspring in the case of God than in the case of humans; the status of God as immaterial, free of passion and simple does not negate this. We may not comprehend how a simple being can have any relative properties. However, Basil takes it as a necessary implication of the titles 'Father' and 'Son': the logic of these titles works in the same way when applied to God as when they are applied to humans. This implies a model of theological epistemology that avoids Eunomius' claim to have exact knowledge of the divine essence, while avoiding agnosticism. Theology can make some headway by attending to the logic of its revealed language.

However, a tension appears to arise, for while Basil is clear on the applicability of logical principles like relation to the transcendent realm, he is equally clear that we need to 'purify' certain concepts, like the concepts of Fatherhood and generation or begetting, in order to grasp them rightly in the case of God.[11] On the one hand, we apply

[10] By 'correspondence' here I do not mean a theory of truth; for all I can tell, Basil does hold a correspondence theory of truth and would hope that his language 'corresponds' with reality. What I mean is that ontological claims about God do not alter how language functions in the case of God to such an extent that linguistic and logical principles themselves change. Another example of this is Basil's treatment of privation in *Eun.* 1.9–10. Eunomius' argument (following Aetius) is that God does not undergo privation (the loss of a prior possession) and that 'ingenerate' names the essence of God. Therefore, 'ingenerate' is not, despite appearances, a negative or privative term. For Basil, it is only that. No principle from the ontological sphere dictates what 'ingenerate' has to mean: if it is linguistically privative, then that is what it means. See below on Positive and Negative Names, under distinction (5).

[11] Not only in *Against Eunomius*: see *On Faith* (PG 31: 684.20–3; trans. Wagner, FoC 9: 62–3), where Basil says we should *not* employ "the name 'Father' entirely according to our usage" (*τὸ, Πατὴρ, ὁλόκληρον κατὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν χρῆσιν*) lest we be impious (*ἀσεβοῦμεν*). This impiety clearly is a matter of attributing passionate, materialistic notions to God, not of attributing the relationality of the term 'Father' to God, which is not Basil's concern here. In a nice act of one-upmanship on Basil of Ancyra and Eunomius, Basil immediately proceeds to say that the same materialistic connotations attend the name 'Creator', and so one must purify this concept also. For Basil of Ancyra and Eunomius, this term is inherently more pure than Father. Basil of Caesarea, by contrast, holds that we must purify a number of concepts and terms used in scripture for God. In *spir.* 8.18, he argues that we must purify the concept of 'Way', as applied in scripture to the Son, from its ordinary sense.

ordinary language to God without altering its basic meaning; on the other, we must modify ordinary language to avoid problematic connotations. I will argue in a moment that the two ideas are not necessarily inconsistent. But first some comment is necessary on why Basil found it immediately pressing to avoid modelling divine Fatherhood too closely on ordinary human fatherhood.

While it was a concern throughout the fourth century,[12] the necessity of finding an account of divine causality that was free of all passionate and materialistic connotations came to the fore of doctrinal debate in the late 350s. During this time, there arose a powerful, but short-lived alliance of theologians from across the Empire who became known commonly as 'Homoians'.[13] In their creeds, they spoke of the Son as 'like' the Father while sanctioning the language of 'likeness in essence'. For some in this group, which through at least 360 included Aetius and Eunomius, 'generation' language and language of the divine 'Father' and 'Son' were theologically unsalvageable. The early pro-Nicene Hilary of Poitiers reports that, at the Council assembled by Constantius in Seleucia in the fall of 359 (one of a set of twin councils), the radically subordinationist wing of the Homoian group denied "that generation from God is possible".[14] He further reports a telling passage which someone at the Council read from a sermon that had been delivered by Eunomius' patron, Eudoxius of Antioch: "God was what he is. Father he was not, because he did not have a son: for if there was a son, it is necessary that there also was a female, and conversation and dialogue, and a conjugal agreement, and allurement, and, finally, a natural organ for generating."[15] As Thomas Kopecek has suggested, this was perceived as a major insult to the homoiousian party, which had issued a letter just months earlier after the Fifth Sirmian Council in May arguing that the terms 'Father' and 'Son' could be purified of materialistic content. Basil of Ancyra, the author of this letter, had argued that, by taking the relation of Father and Son to be parallel to that of Creator and creature (which no one believed to have problematic

12 e.g. Athanasius, *c. Ar.* 1.16, 1.26–8.

13 See Ayres, *Nicaea*, 138ff.

14 Kopecek, *History of Neo-Arianism*, 1: 201, quoting Hilary, *C. Const.* 12.

15 Kopecek, *History of Neo-Arianism*, 1: 201, from *C. Const.* 13.

associations), one could retain this biblical language without untoward consequences.[16] In his *Apology*, one of Eunomius' arguments against the view that Father and Son share an essence is that this sounds far too much like human generation with its "passions".[17] Surely the desire to maintain the *apatheia* of God is one motivation for Eunomius' reserving the name 'Father' for the divine activity that produced the Son, and not applying it to God in his essence.[18]

This is the immediate backdrop to Basil's *Contra Eunomium*. He must find a way to hold both (A) that the Father and the Son share a common essence and (B) that the generation of the Son from the Father is without passionate, materialistic, or anthropomorphic connotations. He believes he cannot reject the names 'Father' and 'Son', or take them metaphorically, or view 'Father' as equivalent to 'Creator'. For Basil, one who rejects this language rejects the very grace of baptism, at which the revealed names are invoked.[19] He thinks Eunomius has made the language merely metaphorical. Basil's own response to the problem in *Eun.* 2 is not entirely unlike that of Eunomius in *Apol.* 16–18. For both, it is crucial to deny that terms like 'begetting' or 'Father' have any corporeal connotations in the case of God. However, Eunomius believes this implies that the scriptural designation of God as 'Father' and the ordinary designation of men as fathers are equally homonymous as the scriptural language of God's 'eye' and the use of the same word for human sense organs. Basil grants that there are many metaphors in scripture. However, he denies Eunomius' assumption that generation in its ordinary usage (κατὰ τὴν ὧδε συνήθειαν) has only one sense.[20] For Basil, the verb "to generate or beget" (γεννᾶν) has two senses, even in reference to human fathers: (1) "the passion of the begetter", and (2) "the affinity with that which is begotten" (τῆς πρὸς τὸ γεννώμενον οἰκειώσεως).[21] Basil takes the second, 'G-rated' version and says it

[16] Basil apud Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.
[17] *Apol.* 16.
[18] Cf. *Apol.* 24.21–6.
[19] *Eun.* 2.22; cf. the opening of *Eun.*: 1.1.1–6.
[20] *Eun.* 2.24.16–23.
[21] *Eun.* 2.24.18; cf. 1.27.17–18, 29–30, where Basil uses the term οἰκειότης for the Son's relationship to the Father. This may be significant: this was a Peripatetic, rather than a Stoic, term for the natural relation a child has to its parent. Basil seems to use it

can literally be applied to God. This is true even though we do not comprehend the divine generation, especially how God can have (2) without (1).[22] Despite the incomprehensibility, Basil's invocation of the 'G-rated' sense of begetting suffices to defuse Eunomius' objection. This is how he makes good on his earlier statement that it is necessary to purify our concepts when used of God.

In this argument, Basil once again makes an explicit appeal to ordinary language. This shows that his arguments for purification of concepts like 'Father' and 'generation' are not inconsistent with his appeal elsewhere to ordinary usage of terms like relation. There may be a *tension* between ordinary and theological usage of terms, but there is not a complete impasse, which would result in contradiction or paradox. For Basil, the theologian does *not* say 'God is Father', but—wink, wink—'not *really*'. That is the position he opposes.

This should lead us to be suspicious of one way of reading the Cappadocians, which holds that they 'mystify' theological language to such a degree that no meaningful affirmations can be made of God and we are left with paradox. On this reading, they appeal to divine incomprehensibility in order to keep pesky dialecticians like Eunomius from questioning their dogmatic assertions about the Trinity.[23] According to Richard Lim's social analysis, it is the heterousians who are the popularizers of theological discourse. Coupled with this is the

when he is speaking of the *child's* natural affinity for the parent, and οἰκείωσις for the parent's love for the child. If this is deliberate, then Basil or his source is aware of the fact that the Stoics tended to base social affinity in the latter relationship and used the latter term, while Peripatetics like Theophrastus spoke about the former relationship and used the former term. See Brad Inwood, 'Comments on Professor Görgemann's Paper, *The Two Forms of* Oikeiôsis *in Arius and the Stoa*,' in W. W. Fortenbaugh, ed. *On Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics: The Work of Arius Didymus* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1983), 190–201.

[22] To invoke a parallel, the same problem obtains for Augustine's mature view of Adam and Eve's sex before the Fall: how to speak of physical sex between man and woman with no lust?

[23] Perhaps the clearest statement of this view is Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), ch. 5, entitled 'Meddlesome Curiosity, Mystification, and Social Order in Late Antiquity'. In ch. 4, we find that Aetius and Eunomius were, culturally speaking, the mirror-images of such authoritarian dogmatism. While Lim's account focuses on the social-historical side, the reading also appears in more theological works, such as Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 4: 106–7, cited by Hanson at *The Search*, 731 n. 212.

claim that they opened theological debates to rational speculation, whereas the pro-Nicenes shrouded it in authoritarian appeals to mystery. Like the two Gregories, Basil of Caesarea is no popularist. But he does defend the 'common usage' (that is, the usage learned in aristocratic education) of terms in theology.[24] This is not an appeal to 'ordinary language' (that is, laypersons' language) in the way some philosophers in antiquity and in the twentieth century have done.[25] But it is a counsel of sense, of responsible philosophical usage of language, within theology, and hence an attack upon theological obfuscation.

I have argued that there is a tension between this view and Basil's view of purifying theological concepts—a tension, not an incompatibility. But in the title for this section, I claimed that this tension is 'central'—and this needs some comment. Basil makes his claim about common usage of terms in the context of debates about specific terms like 'relation' and 'generation'. However, it would be a mistake to infer that the principle is limited to these terms. Rather, it seems to underlie his (and Gregory of Nyssa's) ways of dealing with all sorts of words and concepts that turn up in theological contexts. They consistently argue that these terms must be taken in what they understand to be the most commonsense meaning of the terms. So, for instance, Basil argues that 'ingenerate' means the same as 'from no source' and that consequently, it does not tell us God's essence but some other feature of God. We will deal with this distinction further in the next section. For now, it is enough to note that it is based on a rejection of Eunomius' view that propositions said of God follow an entirely different logic from those said of mundane, composite realities. By maintaining the tension between purifying concepts and applying the common usage of them to the divine, Basil is on his way to articulating how theology can work logically without

[24] Vaggione has argued that this emphasis on ordinary language deflates Eunomius' attempt to make theology "the exclusive preserve of the 'expert'": *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*, 265.

[25] These philosophers were intent on preventing philosophers from doing just what Basil does: using ordinary language as if it could 'describe' metaphysical realities. For ordinary language philosophy in late antiquity, see Michael Frede's analysis of the empiricist school of medicine and its Pyrrhonian sceptical epistemology (again, fundamentally opposed to Basil's theological epistemology): 'The Ancient Empiricists' in idem, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

falling into either pure equivocation between theological and ordinary speech or crude anthropomorphism.

KEY DISTINCTIONS

In this section, I will outline four key distinctions Basil draws within theological language and that require this principle that logical and linguistic principles can survive the purification process or the translation from the human to the divine realm. These distinctions are

(1) 'knowing that' versus 'knowing what',
(2) 'knowing how' versus 'knowing what',
(3) absolute versus relative terms,
(4) common versus particular, which is usually described in terms of essence/substance (*οὐσία*) or substrate (*ὑποκείμενον*) versus properties (*ἰδιώματα*, *ἰδιότητες*), and
(5) positive versus negative terms.

Understanding these distinctions is absolutely crucial to understanding Basil's doctrine of simplicity. For whether one takes them individually or collectively, they constitute a fascinating response to Eunomius' view that simplicity implies the identity thesis. In what follows, I will examine each distinction in some detail. However, I hope the forest is not lost for the trees: all of this is an elaborate negative doctrine of simplicity in Basil. In each step, Basil is articulating a view of theological language that does not require the identity thesis. He is, in effect, gutting Eunomius' doctrine of divine simplicity.

(1) 'Knowing That' versus 'Knowing What'

Distinction (1) can be viewed as corresponding to Aristotle's distinction between knowing "the 'that'" and knowing "the 'because'". Let me be clear: neither Aristotle nor a commentator on him is necessarily Basil's *source* for this particular distinction. In *Letter* 234, a key

text for the distinction, the only source that Basil cites to justify it is Hebrews 11:6: "For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists (ὅτι ἔστιν) and that he rewards those who seek after him." However, Basil places this passage into a context that is conceptually similar to Aristotle's distinction, and could have been mediated through any number of more proximate authors.[26] The distinction is not present in the Hebrews passage: it does not recognize a separate category of knowing 'what God is'; nor *a fortiori* does it claim that knowing 'that God is' is in any way less complete as knowledge than 'knowing what God is'. But both Basil's distinction (1) and Aristotle's distinction between "the 'because'" and "the 'that'" delineate a less complete (though necessary) from a more complete form of knowledge. For Aristotle, while "the 'because'" is prior by nature, "the 'that'" is prior with respect to us. Consequently, in non-deductive subjects like ethics, one moves from knowing 'that' (e.g. *that* paying taxes is just) to knowing why.[27] This is how Aristotle was able to get around the problem of needing to know 'what virtue is' before he could say anything about it, such as whether it can be learned; this is his way around the principle of the epistemological priority of definition. And the same distinction serves the same role in Basil. In so far as knowing why or because involves knowing essences or definitions, Basil holds that one never fully makes the transition. This is the force of his denial that one never knows God's essence. However, progress in theological understanding is, like Aristotelian moral education, a process of moving from basic concepts to reflection upon those concepts, a process we will return to in the next chapter, when we discuss *epinoia*.

For now, let us turn to Basil's discussion of distinction (1) in *Letter* 234. In this relatively late letter to Amphilochius, Basil faces a clearly Eunomian formulation of Meno's paradox, where 'worship' has replaced 'enquire after': "Do you worship what you know or what you do not know?" The question is meant to generate a dilemma:

[26] Cf. Origen, *prin.* 1.3.52–3; Athanasius, *ep. Serap.* 1.18: Athanasius also cites Hebrews 11:6.

[27] For an account of Aristotelian moral education along these lines, see M. F. Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 69–92.

if Basil answers that he worships what he knows, then he will be asked to specify the essence of the object of his worship; if he does not know, then he worships what he does not know, which is taken to be absurd. Given the common 'apophatic' statements of the Cappadocians, we might expect Basil to grasp the second horn. But he does not. Rather, he distinguishes two senses of knowing, in effect cutting the knot tied by the premise of the epistemological priority of definition:

> But we say that 'knowing' has multiple meanings. For we claim to know the greatness, the power, the wisdom, the goodness of God, as well as the providence by which he cares for us and the justice of his judgments, but not the very essence [of God]. So the question is eristic.[28] For the one who claims that he does not know the essence does not admit that he does not know God, since our notion of God is drawn together from many things which we have enumerated.[29]

If one can reasonably be said to 'know' something of whose essence one is ignorant, then the formulation of the Meno paradox to which Basil is responding loses its force. It is clear from the letter that, for both Basil and his unnamed interrogator, 'knowing what' is equivalent to knowing the essence.[30] For Basil, this is so unknowable that he inverts the original charge: "If you claim to know the essence, you do *not* know him."[31]

But what about the things that Basil claims we do know? To the list in the quote above, Basil adds "his fearfulness, his benevolence, his justice, his creativity, his foreknowledge, his rendering due rewards,

[28] The fact that Basil labels the initial question of *ep.* 234 as 'eristic' seems to indicate that he is aware that it is a formulation of Meno's paradox, for this is Socrates' characterization of it at *Meno* 80e2: Basil has merely changed *ἐριστικόν* to *ἐπηρεαστική*. Basil's form appears in late ancient authors such as Alexander of Aphrodisias and Galen: see LSJ, s.v. *ἐπηρεαστικη*.

[29] *Ep.* 234.1.5–12 (42 Courtonne): '*Ἡμεῖς δὲ λέγομεν ὅτι τὸ εἰδέναι πολύσημον. Καὶ γὰρ τὴν μεγαλειότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰδέναι λέγομεν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν καὶ τὴν ἀγαθότητα καὶ τὴν πρόνοιαν ᾗ ἐπιμελεῖται ἡμῶν καὶ τὸ δίκαιον αὐτοῦ τῆς κρίσεως, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν οὐσίαν. Ὥστε ἐπηρεαστικὴ ἡ ἐρώτησις. Οὐ γὰρ ὁ τὴν οὐσίαν μὴ φάσκων εἰδέναι ὡμολόγησε τὸν Θεὸν μὴ ἐπίστασθαι, ἐκ πολλῶν ὧν ἀπηριθμησάμεθα συναγομένης ἡμῖν τῆς περὶ Θεοῦ ἐννοίας.*

[30] This is also clearly the case in *Eun.* 1.15, which I discuss below with respect to Basil's distinction (2).

[31] *Ep.* 234.2.

his greatness and his providence". When a short while later in the letter, Basil explicitly introduces the famous distinction between 'knowing what God is' and 'knowing that God is', the latter refers not to a bare concept of existence. Rather, the knowledge must include these lists of attributes or "activities" (*ἐνέργειαι*), as he calls them. In other words, 'knowing that God is' is either shorthand for 'knowing that God is just, benevolent, etc.' or is a claim that 'God', understood as just, benevolent, etc. has being; the extension of the set of items that fall under the concept is not null. Basil is not claiming that existence by itself is informative. He paraphrases Hebrews 11:6, "To know that God is, not what he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who seek for him, is sufficient faith."[32] Even in this passage, the knowing that is called "sufficient faith" is not merely knowledge that God exists.

In the letter, Basil charges his opponents with holding that the attributes listed are synonymous, that they "mean the same thing as one another" (*ἰσοδυναμεῖ ἀλλήλοις*).[33] For Basil, by contrast, the various terms that we know of God, the 'that' that we know, are non-synonymous. They name diverse activities of God, from which we come to know him. Basil recognizes that his Eunomian opponent denies that distinction (1) is meaningful in the case of simple being: "'But God is simple', [the opponent] says, 'and everything whatsoever which is knowable of him belongs to his essence.'" However, since this opponent believes this implies the absurd synonymous version of the identity thesis, Basil takes the objection to be a mere sophism. Once again, we see Basil denying that the logic of predication is entirely different when speaking of a reality that is simple.

Distinction (1) has powerful polemical implications, even if Basil himself does not draw these clearly. In Chapter 4, I remarked on the significance of the divine name 'He who is' (Ex. 3:14) for Eunomius.

[32] Ibid.: *Πίστις δὲ αὐτάρκης εἰδέναι ὅτι ἐστὶν ὁ Θεός, οὐχὶ τί ἐστι, καὶ τοῖς ἐκζητοῦσιν αὐτὸν μισθαποδότης γίνεται*. The standard text of Heb 11:6 reads: *πιστεῦσαι γὰρ δεῖ τὸν προσερχόμενον τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ἔστιν καὶ τοῖς ἐκζητοῦσιν αὐτὸν μισθαποδότης*. Note the co-presence of divine existence and 'seeking' language, perhaps suggesting a link with Pss. 14:1–2; 53:1–2. Another biblical text stressing the importance of knowing that God exists is Wisdom 13:1. Cf. 2 Esdras 7:23; 8:58.

[33] *Ep.* 234.1. Here, identity in sense is apparently derived from identity of reference (the terms all mean the same because they all point to the same object, the divine essence). On this argument, see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, 287.

If Eunomius is right, God's being and God's essence are synonymous (the notion of being implied in the divine name 'He who is' amounts to the same as the notion of 'ingeneracy'), such that knowing 'what God is' and knowing 'that God is' are identical. In fact, Wickham may be right to hold that Aetius and Eunomius anticipate the Anselmian view that God's existence is implied by his essence.[34] Basil does not discuss the possibility of such an implication, because he does not think humans have access to the divine essence. However, he does sever the link between knowledge of essence and knowledge of existence by drawing distinction (1).

Basil's fullest discussion of distinction (1) comes in *Letter* 235. In this letter to Amphilochius, Basil addresses the issue of whether "faith" or "knowledge" is prior.[35] His answer is somewhat confusing: he declares that "generally in the sciences (*καθόλου μὲν ἐπὶ τῶν μαθημάτων*) faith precedes knowledge". However, he says that "in our own teaching" (*ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς λόγου*) he is content with saying that a certain kind of knowledge precedes faith. Basil is not actually opposing the two (general instruction and Christian teaching). Rather, he is arguing that in both a certain kind of notion comes first, despite the difference in how one acquires it, as the following discussion makes plain:

> For in sciences one must first take it on faith that the letter spoken is alpha, and later, having learned the characters and pronunciations, grasp also the exact apprehension of the force of the letter. But in faith in God the notion that God is precedes, and we gather this notion from his works. For it is by perceiving his wisdom, power, goodness, and all his invisible qualities from the creation of the world, that we come to a recognition of Him . . . And faith follows this knowledge, and worship follows such faith.[36]

[34] 'The *Syntagmation*', 560 n. 1.

[35] *Ep.* 235.1.1 (Courtonne, vol. 3, 44): *Τί πρότερον, ἡ γνῶσις, ἢ ἡ πίστις*

[36] *Ep.* 235.1.5–17, trans. DeFerrari, altered (Courtonne, vol. 3, p. 44): *Ἐπὶ μὲν γὰρ τῶν μαθημάτων πιστεῦσαι δεῖ πρῶτον, ὅτι ἄλφα λέγεται, καὶ μαθόντα τοὺς χαρακτῆρας καὶ τὴν ἐκφώνησιν, ὕστερον λαβεῖν καὶ τὴν ἀκριβῆ κατανόησιν τῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ στοιχείου. Ἐν δὲ τῇ περὶ Θεοῦ πίστει ἡγεῖται μὲν ἡ ἔννοια ἡ περὶ τοῦ ὅτι ἐστὶ Θεός, ταύτην δὲ ἐκ τῶν δημιουργημάτων συνάγομεν. Σοφὸν γάρ, καὶ δυνατόν, καὶ ἀγαθόν, καὶ πάντα αὐτοῦ τὰ ἀόρατα ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου κτίσεως νοοῦντες ἐπιγινώσκομεν . . . Ταύτῃ δὲ τῇ γνώσει ἡ πίστις ἀκολουθεῖ, καὶ τῇ τοιαύτῃ πίστει ἡ προσκύνησις.*

The comparison with learning language is striking and reveals a lot about distinction (1) and about Basil's theological epistemology generally. This text makes clear that 'knowing that God is' cannot mean learning bare existence, any more than learning 'that alpha is said' is learning the 'bare existence' of alpha. Rather, one learns that *this one*, this agent who is wise, powerful, good, and so forth, is God. Basil calls this a "notion" (*ἔννοια*) and claims that we "gather" this from God's works. This is not unlike Stoic accounts of actualizing innate preconceptions through sense experience, rendering them full-blown 'notions', which are nonetheless commonly shared by all for their being actualized in each individual through experience. In *Against Eunomius*, Basil explicitly refers to "that God is" as the content of our "common notion" about God.[37] In *Letter* 235, Basil calls this "knowledge" and says that "faith" follows on it, and "worship" on faith. There is a certain epistemological progress here, which the rest of the letter outlines.

Basil returns to his claim, which we saw in *Letter* 234, that "knowledge" has multiple meanings. He offers two lists in *Letter* 235 of the various ways in which we can be said to know something or someone. The first is more cognitive: "a thing is knowable with respect to number, magnitude, power, mode of existence, time of generation, and essence".[38] The second includes members that appear to be not strictly cognitive, but which nevertheless count as 'knowledge': "For [knowledge] is the understanding of him who created us, and the apprehension of his wonders, and the keeping of the commandments, and the affinity to him."[39] Basil's immediate polemical point is that his heterousian interlocutors are wrong to reduce knowledge to knowledge of essence. But he is not merely arguing negatively, but is putting forth his own account of knowledge. Interestingly, it is one

[37] *Eun.* 1.12.8–9 (SC 299: 212): *Ἀρ᾽ ἐκ τῆς κοινῆς ἐννοίας; Ἀλλ᾽ αὕτη τὸ εἶναι τὸν θεόν, οὐ τὸ τί εἶναι ἡμῖν ὑποβάλλει.*

[38] *Ep.* 235.2.6–9 (45 Courtonne): . . . *γνωστόν τί ἐστι, τὸ μὲν κατὰ ἀριθμόν, τὸ δὲ κατὰ μέγεθος, τὸ δὲ κατὰ δύναμιν, τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὸν τρόπον τῆς ὑπάρξεως, τὸ δὲ κατὰ τὸν χρόνον τῆς γεννήσεως, τὸ δὲ κατ᾽ οὐσίαν* . . .

[39] *Ep.* 235.3.21–3 (46 Courtonne): *ἥ τε γὰρ τοῦ κτίσαντος ἡμᾶς σύνεσις, καὶ ἡ τήρησις τῶν ἐντολῶν, καὶ ἡ οἰκείωσις ἡ πρὸς αὐτόν*. The translation of *oikeiôsis*, a Stoic technical term, is vexed: I have chosen "affinity" (see LSJ, s.v., 2); Long and Sedley use "appropriation" and "appropriate" for *oikeios*; Inwood has used both "orientation" and "affiliation". See Inwood's comments: Brad Inwood and Pierlugi Donini, 'Stoic ethics', in *CHHP*, 675–738 at 677 and n. 8. Deferrari translates it as "intimacy".

which involves what we might call ethical knowledge.[40] Basil includes the technical term *oikeiôsis*, translated "affinity" here, as a form of knowing God. This term appears in his ascetic works as well.[41] For Basil, as for the Stoics, it describes the natural relation of affection among family members and close friends and of oneself to oneself. For Basil, the Christian life, especially in its ascetic form, is a matter of growing into "affinity" with God, which is something humans are by nature set up to do. The idea plays a significant role in Basil's *Letter* 235 and the account of theological epistemology presented there. The letter closes with this sentence: "And 'The Lord knows those who are his' (2 Tim. 2:19), that is, he receives them on account of their good works into affinity with him." Here, affinity characterizes divine knowledge as well: God 'knowing' his own simply is his affinity with them. Basil has sketched an account of progress in knowledge of God, from knowing 'that' (i.e. gathering that God is powerful, wise, and so forth from his works) to intimate affinity with him, which Basil explicitly likens to a marital relation.

All of these are movements within knowledge, which is a broad word covering a number of different, though presumably related aspects; one does not move 'beyond' knowledge. Basil's understanding of progress from knowing 'that' to a deeper knowledge is not entirely unlike Aristotle's understanding of moral development, in which one grows from knowing 'that' certain things are just and good to internalizing the desires for virtuous activity. Basil's is a theological and ascetic version of this kind of ethical progress. For Basil, the fullness of knowing God will necessarily involve a way of life. Against his view, Eunomius' obsession with knowing essences appears rather anaemic. As Richard Vaggione has argued, there is

[40] A point also made in Basil's homily 'On Mamas, the martyr' (=*Hom.* 337; PG 31: 596D–597A). On this homily generally, see Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 186–7, 323.

[41] See *reg. fus.*, Answer to Question Two: PG 31: 908B–916C; St Basil, *Ascetic Works*, FoC 9, trans. Sr M. Monica Wagner (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1962), 232–9; St Basil the Great, *On the Human Condition*, trans. Nonna Verna Harrison (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2005), 112–17. The *oikeiôsis* view also appears in Basil's *Homily on the Words 'Be Attentive to Yourself'*: S.Y. Rudberg (ed.), *L'homélie de Basile d'Césarée sur le mot 'observe-toi toi-même'* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1962), 23–37; *On the Human Condition*, trans. Harrison, 93–105.

good reason to believe that the heterousians were just as ascetic as their pro-Nicene counterparts, that the polemic against them as hedonists is not to be taken at face value.[42] Still, it is not unfair to say that, in view of what remains of Aetius' and Eunomius' theology, for them theological practice was not necessarily connected with a vision of ascetic life as it was for Basil.

(2) 'Knowing How' versus 'Knowing What'

'Knowing what God is' is contrasted not only with 'knowing that God is' but also with 'knowing how God is' (ὅπως ἐστίν). With distinction (2), Basil is further distancing himself from the principle of the epistemological priority of definition. But it is important to be precise as to what is being distinguished from definitional knowledge (knowledge of *what* something is) in distinction (2).

Whereas Basil trots out 'knowing that God is' with no qualifications, he apologizes for speaking of 'how God is': "So, then, when we reflect upon the matter, we find that our notion of unbegottenness does not fall under the examination of 'what it is', but rather—and here I am forced to speak this way—under the examination of 'how it is'."[43] Basil proceeds to explain 'knowing how' in terms of knowing the cause 'whence' (ὅθεν) something comes into being, a fact which accounts for his hesitation about using the language of 'how' in the case of God. The point is not of course that we can say 'whence' God comes into being, but that this is the kind of predicate 'unbegotten' is. To assert (or deny) an origin is distinct from defining. No term that tells us only about something's origin (ὅθεν)—even if it simply *denies* that the being in question has an origin, as is the case with "unbegotten"—tells us anything about what makes it the entity it is. Just as saying Adam came "from God" does not tell us *what* Adam is, so too denying that God has an origin tells us not *what* God is, but "that he is 'from no source' (μηδαμόθεν)".[44] In *Contra Eunomium*,

[42] Richard Vaggione, 'Of Monks and Lounge Lizards: "Arians", Polemics and Asceticism in the Roman East', in Barnes and Williams (eds.), *Arianism after Arius*, 181–214.

[43] *Eun.* 1.15.1–4 (SC 299: 224).

[44] *Eun.* 1.15.11 (SC 299: 224).

Basil is thinking especially of genealogical origins: he refers to Luke's genealogy of Jesus through Joseph's lineage back to Adam and through Adam to God.

The point can be illuminated by a comparison with a passage in Basil's later *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* in which he clarifies various senses of the word "beginning" (ἀρχή). One sense refers to constituent and necessary, but not sufficient causes. Basil defines this sense as "that from which something comes to be (ὅθεν γίνεταί τι) and which is immanent in this thing, as for instance a foundation for a house or a ship's keel".[45] Whether or not such sources are strictly analogous with genealogical ones, the parallel suggests that when Basil draws the distinction between 'knowing what' and 'knowing how', which is glossed in terms of 'knowing *whence*', in *Contra Eunomium*, he is concerned with distinguishing merely necessary causes from sufficient ones. The foundation of a house is necessary for the house to exist, just as Joseph's parents were necessary for him to exist. But neither is sufficient for the 'effect' to exist. The full panoply of causes of a house, including the art in the builder's mind and the purpose or final cause of the house, must be active to account fully for the house. Similarly, Joseph would not exist without the common human nature and the full range of peculiar features that make him who he is. Merely invoking his parents is insufficient in accounting for Joseph's existence (just as invoking human nature without mentioning his parents is). Answering 'whence' only provides one piece of the puzzle since it names merely necessary causes. Answering 'what' provides a different, equally insufficient, but equally necessary piece. The whole analogy might appear otiose since there is no necessary but not sufficient condition for God; nothing analogous to the foundation of a house or Joseph's parents. As Basil himself says, the fact that there is no 'whence' for God is precisely what we signal when we employ the term 'ingenerate'. But, for Basil, the logical distinctions between statements that answer one question and those that answer the other must be kept intact in theological language just as in language about earthly realities.

45 *Hex.* 1.5 (SC 26: 108).

The fact that Basil places 'ingenerate' in the category of 'knowing how' or 'whence' reveals a curious feature of his understanding of logical categories: even a predicate that eliminates a category of its content falls within that category if it answers the appropriate question. 'Ingenerate' falls into the category of 'whence' even though it obviously is precisely the denial of an origin in the case of God. Similarly, one presumes, 'timeless' would fall under 'when' and 'nowhere' under 'where'.

In holding that predicates fall into categories based on the question they answer, Basil aligns himself with Aristotle and his late ancient Neoplatonist commentators, most notably Porphyry in his *Isagôgê*.[46] However, the set of questions Basil is interested in ('What is it?', 'How is it?') appears in neither Aristotle nor Porphyry. The latter two do believe 'What is it?' singles out predicates: generic and specific titles such as 'animal', 'plant', and 'human being' as opposed to differential titles such as 'rational' and 'mortal'. This is different from Basil, who believes 'What is God?' singles out the definition of the divine essence—a usage of 'What is it?' more in line with Plato and the Anonymous Commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*, which is possibly by Porphyry.[47] Basil's use of questions to divide predicates nonetheless places him broadly within this tradition and far from the Stoic tradition some have invoked as background for 'knowing how'.[48] The implication is that, to Basil's mind, Eunomius does not know how to formulate a question well: he would have 'ingenerate' answer 'what?' rather than 'whence?'

(3) Absolute versus Relative Terms

Distinction (3) is another example of Basil's use of non-essential predicates for God. Absolute terms are never said 'of' anything. Relative terms, by contrast, are always said of something: a child is

[46] Extremely helpful here are Jonathan Barnes's comments, with thorough documentation: *Porphyry: Introduction*, trans. with introduction and commentary by Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 85ff.

[47] *Euthyphro* 11a; *Meno* 71b; cf. *Seventh Letter* 343bc. Anonymous Commentary on the *Parmenides* IX.16–23. I owe these references to *Porphyry: Introduction*, trans. with introduction and commentary by Jonathan Barnes, 90.

[48] Bernard Sesboüé, SJ, in SC 299: 81.

a child *of someone*. Basil appears to have drawn most directly on discussions of relatives by grammarians, themselves influenced by Stoicism.[49] The absolute-relative distinction allows Basil in *Against Eunomius* 2.9 to divide names into two classes: absolute names like 'human being', 'horse', and 'ox' signify the thing being named, while relative names like 'son', 'slave', and 'friend' signify a relation and bring to mind the related, unnamed other. One of Basil's central arguments in *Against Eunomius* is that the scriptural names of 'Father' and 'Son' necessarily call to mind a relation. He accuses Eunomius of obscuring this point by reverting to the unscriptural terms 'ingenerate' and 'generate'. However, Basil is unclear as to whether the latter pair is really synonymous with the scriptural pair of Father and Son. At times he argues that 'ingenerate' and 'Father' mean the same thing, while at other times he assumes that they carry a different sense. At any rate, the distinction between absolute and relative terms has strong polemical implications for Basil, which we can see most clearly by proceeding, as Basil does, to the related distinction between *ousia* and *idiômata*.

(4) Common versus Particular

Basil immediately follows his discussion of absolute and relative terms with a confused reference to distinction (4), which will have far-reaching implications for Trinitarian theology. This distinction allows one to state, in so far as is possible for humans, what accounts for diversity in the unity of God. Having distinguished absolute from relative terms, Basil says that even the former, which seem more than relative terms to signify a subject, "do not express the essence, but delineate certain distinguishing marks (*ἰδιώματα*) connected with it".[50] He says he has shown this "a little earlier", which is a

[49] Robertson, 'Relatives'. At 280–1, Robertson argues that the fact that Basil does not discuss the convertibility of relations (i.e. he talks about an offspring being an offspring of someone, but never of a progenitor) suggests his closer affinity with the grammarians than with Aristotle.

[50] *Eun.* 2.9.24–7 (SC 305: 38): *Καίτοι γε μικρὸν ἔμπροσθεν ἐδείκνυτο παρ᾽ ἡμῶν ὅτι καὶ τὰ ἀπολελυμένα τῶν ὀνομάτων, κἂν τὰ μάλιστα δοκῇ ὑποκειμενον, οὐκ αὐτὴν παρίστησι τὴν οὐσίαν, ἰδιώματα δέ τινα περὶ αὐτὴν ἀφορίζει.*

reference to *Against Eunomius* 2.4, where, after an analysis of distinguishing marks, Basil says, "The result is that the name delineates for us the distinct character (*χαρακτῆρα*) of Peter, but it in no way expresses the essence itself."[51] But in that passage, Basil uses the language of distinguishing marks and characteristics in a very different sense from that in 2.9. The confusion itself is worth our attention, for if we reserve judgement for a moment, we can see that Basil is labouring with nothing less than the birth pangs of pro-Nicene Trinitarianism.

Both passages, *Against Eunomius* 2.4 and 2.9, distinguish knowing an *οὐσία* from knowing such marks. But the sense of *οὐσία* in each passage is different. In 2.4, Basil distinguishes between a shared *οὐσία* common to all members of a species and aspects that distinguish particular members from one another: this is what I am calling distinction (4). In 2.9, he distinguishes between what defines the common *οὐσία* and its characteristic traits. Even the title 'human being', Basil says, does not define the *οὐσία*, which must mean the essence, of humanity, but merely communicates certain of humanity's features. The fact that Basil himself appears to confuse the two distinctions suggests that the two ideas are not entirely well-formed yet. But we can see where Basil is heading: he is developing the idea that there are, on the one hand, peculiar features that distinguish individual members of a common species from one another, and on the other hand, features peculiar to a common nature that distinguish that nature or shared substance from others. The former are characteristic marks of individuals; the latter are propria of natures. The same terminology is used for both, but the two ideas are quite different. We will return to the latter in the next chapter when we see that Basil views at least a certain class of divine attributes as propria of the divine nature which the Father and Son share.[52] For now, we need only to ask how Basil conceives of the distinguishing marks of the persons.

[51] *Eun.* 2.4.18–20 (SC 305: 20): *Ὥστε τὸ ὄνομα τὸν χαρακτῆρα μὲν ἡμιν ἀφορίζει τὸν Πέτρου· αὐτὴν δὲ οὐδαμοῦ παρίστησι τὴν οὐσίαν.*

[52] See also Lewis Ayres and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 'Basil of Caesarea', in Lloyd Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

It is important to note that the distinguishing marks are not what results from the distinguishing but rather the means of distinguishing. This is implicit in Basil's most extended discussion of what is common and particular in language for Father and Son.

> But if someone should accept that which is true, namely, that the begotten and the unbegotten are distinctive identifying features that are observed in the substance, which lead to the distinct and unconfused notion of the Father and the Son, then he will escape the danger of impiety and preserve the logical sequence of his reasoning. After all, the distinctive features, which are like particular characters and forms considered in the substance, distinguish what is common by means of the particularizing characters and do not sunder the substance's sameness in nature. For example, the divinity is common, whereas fatherhood and sonship are unique features: from the combination of both, that is, of the common and unique, we arrive at comprehension of the truth. Consequently, upon hearing "unbegotten light" we think of the Father, whereas upon hearing "begotten light" we receive the notion of the Son. In so far as they are light and light, no contrariety exists between them, whereas in so far as they are begotten and unbegotten, one observes the opposition between them.[53]

Basil proceeds to argue that the distinguishing features do not divide a common essence in the sense that they do not alter it among its various participants (Peter is no less a human being than Mary despite the properties that individualize each of them). The properties that distinguish Father and Son are parallel in this way to the differentiae of the genus 'animal'.[54] In other words, the properties are more akin to Porphyrian differentiae than to Porphyrian properties or, as I will call

[53] *Eun.* 2.28.27–42 (SC 305: 118–20): *Εἰ δ' ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀληθές, γνωριστικὰς ἰδιότητας ἐπιθεωρουμένας τῇ οὐσίᾳ δέχοιτό τις εἶναι τὸ γεννητὸν καὶ ἀγέννητον, πρὸς τὴν τρανὴν καὶ ἀσύγχυτον Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ χειραγωγούσας ἔννοιαν, τόν τε τῆς ἀσεβείας διαφεύξεται κίνδυνον καὶ τὸ ἐν τοῖς λογισμοῖς ἀκόλουθον διασώσει. Αἵ γάρ τοι ἰδιότητες, οἱονεὶ χαρακτῆρες τινες καὶ μορφαὶ ἐπιθεωρούμεναι τῇ οὐσίᾳ, διαιροῦσι μὲν τὸ κοινὸν τοῖς ἰδιάζουσι χαρακτῆρσι· τὸ δὲ ὁμοφυὲς τῆς οὐσίας οὐ διακόπτουσιν· Οἷον, κοινὸν μὲν ἡ θεότης· ἰδιώματα δὲ πατρότης καὶ υἱότης· ἐκ δὲ τῆς ἑκατέρου συμπλοκῆς, τοῦ τε κοινοῦ καὶ ἰδίου, ἡ κατάληψις ἡμῖν τῆς ἀληθείας ἐγγίνεται· ὥστε ἀγέννητον μὲν φῶς ἀκούσαντας, τὸν Πατέρα νοεῖν, γεννητὸν δὲ φῶς, τὴν τοῦ Υἱοῦ λαμβάνειν ἔννοιαν. Καθὸ μὲν φῶς καὶ φῶς, οὐδεμιᾶς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐναντιότητος ὑπαρχούσης· καθὸ δὲ γεννητὸν καὶ ἀγέννητον, ἐπιθεωρουμένης τῆς ἀντιθέσεως.*

[54] See also Gregory of Nyssa, *de an. et res.* (PG 46: 52–3), where "common" refers to generic properties and "peculiar" to properties distinct and essential to a species.

them, propria.[55] The combination of them with common terms like ‘light’ and ‘divinity’ produces the best possible grasp of the Father and Son. Basil gives examples of the properties here: ingenerate and fatherhood for the Father; generate and sonship for the Son.[56] Just as the Son is the Son and not ‘sonship’, so too is the Son not best named ‘generate’ or the property ‘being generate’, and the same goes for the Father’s properties of ‘fatherhood’ and ‘ingeneracy’. Eunomius has, in other words, confused a differential property with a name. His mistake is the same as calling either a particular human being or humanity in general by the name ‘rationality’ or perhaps ‘rational’. We say such things at times (e.g. ‘she is beauty itself’), but only in poetic and metaphorical contexts, and Eunomius clearly is not trying to be poetic!

The language of *ousia* versus *idiômata* is Basil’s preferred language for the speaking of unity and diversity, of common and peculiar, in the Trinity in his text *Against Eunomius*. Even in a later text like *Letter* 214, where Basil adopts the language of *ousia* and *hypostasis* for common and particular, respectively, he continues to explain *hypostasis* by referring to *idiômata*, showing that the latter is more fundamental for his Trinitarian theology.[57]

[55] There is precedent in late ancient philosophy for using propria to state differentiae: see Jonathan Barnes’s comments, *Porphyry: Introduction*, 217 (esp. the passage from Alexander cited there).

[56] The two properties listed for each person are clearly intended to be parallel here: ‘generate’ tells us nothing that ‘sonship’ does not also tell us in this case. ‘Being generate’ and ‘being a son’ are more like two descriptions of the same property, and hence the same differentia, than two properties: ‘being generate’ does not introduce a new division that ‘being a son’ does not already introduce. They are more like ‘rational’ and ‘thinking’ as names for a differentia of humanity than like ‘rational’ and ‘biped’.

[57] *Ep.* 214.4. (2: 205 Courtonne): . . . *ὃν ἔχει λόγον τὸ κοινὸν πρὸς τὸ ἴδιον, τοῦτον ἔχει ἡ οὐσία πρὸς τὴν ὑπόστασιν. Ἕκαστος γὰρ ἡμῶν καὶ τῷ κοινῷ τῆς οὐσίας λόγῳ τοῦ εἶναι μετέχει, καὶ τοῖς περὶ αὐτὸν ἰδιώμασιν ὁ δεῖνα ἔστι καὶ ὁ δεῖνα. Οὕτω κἀκει ὁ μὲν τῆς οὐσίας λόγος κοινός, οἷον ἡ ἀγαθότης, ἡ θεότης, ἢ εἴ τι ἄλλο νοοῖτο· ἡ δὲ ὑπόστασις ἐν τῷ ἰδιώματι τῆς πατρότητος, ἢ τῆς υἱότητος, ἢ τῆς ἁγιαστικῆς δυνάμεως θεωρεῖται.* “. . . as the common is to the particular, so too is the *ousia* to the *hypostasis*. For each of us both participates in being by virtue of the common formula of essence, and is so-and-so and so-and-so by virtue of the properties connected with him. In the same way too in the case of God, the formula of essence is common, for example, goodness, divinity, or whatever else might be conceived, while the *hypostasis* is considered in the property of fatherhood, or sonship, or sanctifying power.” This letter is conventionally dated in the autumn of 375.

Basil may be drawing the distinction of common and particular at least in part from a very proximate Christian source. Ayres lists five options and concludes that "during the 357–64 period similar distinctions had begun to appear across the eastern Mediterranean".[58] So, Basil was part of a broader trajectory; he did not invent distinction (4). Nor was Basil the sole or primary influence on the broad range of thinkers who over the next decade came to view the Trinitarian persons as distinguishable, yet co-ordinate realities.[59] Nonetheless, his influence on this topic on at least one principal actor in the influential creed-making period of the early 380s, his brother Gregory, is indisputable.

Basil does not liken the Trinitarian persons to human persons *per se*. Rather, they are examples of individuals who share a common essence. In Ayres's phrase, "Basil's arguments would lose nothing if he had spoken of three cats or dogs."[60] Basil simply does not tell us what that which he comes to call a *hypostasis* is. Nor can he without falling into a serious logical problem: as Behr notes, "It is . . . impossible to give a general definition of *hypostasis*."[61] If one could give a common account for the term, one would have another common term in addition to the *ousia*. This is why even saying that there are three *hypostaseis* is somewhat misleading. There is nothing common *qua* hypostasis; Basil's claim is rather that the *ousia* is the common term, which is individuated by bundles of *idiômata* into God knows what, but we'll call it a *hypostasis*.

Nonetheless, there is an interesting passage in *Against Eunomius* in which Basil contrasts "persons" (*πρόσωπα*), which he takes to be a label here for whatever Father and Son are, with "things" (*τοῖς πράγμασι*), which he uses to denote things that answer to properties like 'the ingenerate' and 'the generate'.[62] In fact, this is not an isolated theme in the anti-Eunomian polemic: Basil frequently criticizes Eunomius for passing over the scriptural and traditional terms 'Father' and 'Son' in favour of unscriptural words that can be used to produce

58 Ayres, *Nicaea*, 204 (the list is on 202–4).
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 207.
61 Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 2: 308.
62 *Eun*. 1.16.24–32.

pseudo-demonstrations of dissimilarity and subordination, which can then be transferred back to 'Father' and 'Son'. However, this passage—even if it does not present an isolated point—does not warrant us reading 'Father' and 'Son' as persons in the sense in which humans are persons.[63]

And yet, one should not infer that Basil believes that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share a merely specific unity. All that has been shown thus far is the sense in which they are distinct. We will more fully discuss how they are one in the next chapter, where we will see that they are one in nature, power, goodness, and life. Distinction (4) shows us that this unity is not compromised by the marks that distinguish the persons; it shows us little else. It was a useful point against Aetius and Eunomius, who argued that the opposition between these marks (especially between ingenerate and generate) implies a difference in substance between the Father and the Son. While useful in overturning this assertion, distinction (4) should not be taken as the totality of what Basil has to say about the unity and interrelation of the Trinity.

(5) Positive versus Negative Terms

Some terms are linguistically affirmative (e.g. 'red', 'good') and others linguistically negative (e.g. 'immortal', 'invisible'). The distinction is often obvious in Greek, where the alpha-privative marks negative terms, including ingenerate (ἀγέννητος). However, a term need not have the alpha-privative to be semantically negative. Basil views the term ἁπλοῦς ('simple') as semantically negative, synonymous with the terms ἀσύνθετος ('incomposite') and ἀμερής ('partless'),[64] even though it is not formed with the alpha-privative.[65] The distinction between positive and negative terms is a matter of what they tell us about the subjects to which they are attributed. Positive terms reveal

[63] For further discussion, see Ayres, *Nicaea*, 207–9.

[64] See, e.g., *Eun.* 1.23.

[65] The word ἁπλοῦς apparently derives from ἅμα (all at once), just like the Latin *simplex* derives from *simul*: see LSJ, s.v.

"that which is present to" something (τὰ προσόντα),[66] negative terms "that which is not present" to it (τὰ μὴ προσόντα).[67] For example, to say 'God is just' is to say that 'justice' is present to God. And "The name 'ingenerate' is indicative of that which is not present, for it reveals the fact that generation is not present to God."[68]

The language of "is present" needs some comment. I take this to be primarily a claim about predication. To say that some predicate, ϕ, "is present" to some grammatical subject, x, is to say that 'ϕ', predicated of x, asserts the proposition 'x is ϕ'. The term 'αϕ' ('ϕ' with the alpha privative), predicated of x, asserts the proposition 'Not: x is ϕ'. By construing "is present" thus as connoting a relation between predicate and subject, rather than a (metaphysical) relation between substance and property, I leave open the possibility that there could be a term that makes a true, positive predication without picking out or denoting a real property. For instance, 'is on the left' is a positive predicate; it is not equivalent to 'is not on the right' or any other negation. The proposition 'the column is on the left' can be true and yet not assert any property really belonging to (metaphysically 'present to') the column.

Basil's distinction (5) implies that there cannot be a term that is both linguistically negative and yet somehow positive in reference. This is important to note, for it distinguishes Basil's approach to negation from a later tradition of Neoplatonist and Christian negative theology. Sesboüé charges Basil with sophistry in drawing such a sharp distinction between positive and negative terms. After all,

[66] The present participles of πρόσειμι plus the dative were a common way of denoting attributes or properties of a thing—they were used in this way by Aetius and Eunomius as well.

[67] Cf. *Eun.* 1.10.5–7. More precisely, at *Eun.* 1.10.33–5, Basil explains that "From each kind of appellation we learn either, concerning things that are present, *that* they are present, or concerning things that are not present, *that* they are not present." (SC 299: 206): Ἐκ τοίνυν ἑκατέρου τοῦ εἴδους τῶν προσηγοριῶν διδασκόμεθα ἢ περὶ τῶν προσόντων ὅτι πρόσεστιν, ἢ περὶ τῶν μὴ προσόντων ὅτι μὴ πρόσεστι. The use of ὅτι here may correspond with the use of it in distinction (1), which would mean that learning 'that God is' would be learning 'that x is present to God', which would explain why Basil lists *positive* attributes when he discusses learning 'that God is'.

[68] *Eun.* 1.10.36–7 (SC 299: 206): Τό γε μὴν 'ἀγέννητον' τῶν μὴ προσόντων ἐστὶ σημαντικόν· δηλοῖ γὰρ τὸ μὴ προσεῖναι γέννησιν τῷ θεῷ.

Nos negations à propos de Dieu sont en fait des negations d'une negation. Elles expriment donc une positivité. Les negations peuvent servir à exprimer quelque chose de la substance de Dieu. Après avoir exprimé de manière brillante l'aspect analogique de tout discours humain sur Dieu, Basile s'arrête sur un argument qui repose sur l'univocité formelle de l'attribut negatif.[69]

Sesboüé claims that negative terms are actually "negations of negations", and hence positive. Hildebrand follows him here, saying that 'ingenerate' "truly has a referent in the being of God", specifically, "that he is eternal".[70] But this might be simply to dismiss Basil's view without taking it seriously. The influence of Pseudo-Dionysius on Sesboüé at least is evident, but it is anachronistic to read his understanding of negative theology back onto Basil.[71] It is also misleading to claim that Basil endorses any analogical theory of divine naming, for simple want of evidence in Basil's own texts. If the view expressed in *Eun.* 1.10 about negative terms is a 'univocal' view, then that is because this is Basil's view throughout the work.

If Hildebrand is right, and Basil can simply substitute 'eternal' for ingenerate, then Basil's argument against Eunomius becomes problematic. For this argument demands a disjunction of positive and negative names.[72] For Basil, 'ingenerate' is *only* a negation. Since no name of this kind can express the defining characteristic of anything, 'ingenerate' simply cannot describe the divine essence, as Eunomius claims.[73] For Sesboüé and Hildebrand, 'not generate' does not exhaust the semantic range of 'ingenerate'.[74] On their reading, we could

[69] SC 299: 208–9 n. 1.

[70] Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, 55.

[71] For the origin of the 'negation of negation' theory, see Carlos Steel, 'Negatio Negationis: Proclus on the Final Lemma of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*', in John J. Cleary (ed.), *Traditions of Platonism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 351–68.

[72] This disjunction is stated at *Eun.* 1.10.5–7 (SC 299: 204): *Ἐν τοίνυν τοῖς περὶ θεοῦ λεγομένοις ὀνόμασι, τὰ μὲν τῶν προσόντων τῷ Θεῷ δηλωτικά ἐστι, τὰ δὲ τὸ ἐναντίον τῶν μὴ προσόντων.* ("Now some of the names applied to God are indicative of what is present to God, others, on the contrary, of what is not present.")

[73] *Eun.* 1.10.42–3 (SC 299: 206): *Ἡ δὲ οὐσία οὐχὶ ἕν τι τῶν μὴ προσόντων ἐστίν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ . . .* ("But the essence is certainly not any one of the things that are not present, but rather the very being of God.")

[74] Of course, part of the confusion of the exchange between Basil and Eunomius is their tendency to discuss isolated terms rather than entire statements as bearers of meaning.

substitute 'eternal' (a positive attribute) for 'ingenerate'. Consequently, 'ingeneracy' would sit on both sides of the disjunction between positive and negative terms and would invalidate Basil's argument. Clearly, the fact that God did not come into being follows from the fact that God is eternal, but ingeneracy and eternity are not the same concept (eternity implies ingeneracy, but not vice versa).[75] And it is crucial for Basil's theological epistemology that they not be the same concept. This is because positive and negative terms have different functions: negative terms strip our minds of "unfitting notions", such as thinking that God is corruptible, visible, or generate.[76] But to say that these ideas are unfitting presupposes that we know what is fitting, which we denote with positive terms. Negative terms and positive terms are separate, though to know what falls into one set requires one to know at least some of what falls in the other.

It is worth pausing here and asking how Basil relates to Gregory of Nyssa on this issue. I am attributing what might appear to be a rather minimal account of negative theology to Basil, especially in comparison with someone like Clement: for Basil, negative theology plays a purgative role, and only this.[77] It is crucial for his anti-Eunomian polemic that one be unable to, as it were, negate one's way to the divine essence. Here an important distinction is necessary. In so far as 'negative theology' names the use of privative terminology such as 'unbegotten' and 'incorruptible', Basil uses negative theology rather minimally. In this sense, negations are opposed to affirmations: Basil

[75] Basil says that "the notional difference between [ingeneracy and eternity] is great. For 'ingenerate' is said of that which has no beginning and no cause of its beginning, while 'eternal' is said of that which is prior in being to every time and age." *Eun.* 2.17.54–7 (trans. DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz, altered slightly). For an account of the formation of the concept of ingeneracy from the positive concept of the divine life exceeding temporal boundaries, see *Eun.*1.7.34–40, discussed below. My point is that Basil could not have produced the same analysis by starting with 'ingenerate', precisely because of the ambiguity of the concept, as noted by Athanasius at *Or.* 1.30; *De decr.* 28; cf. *De synodis* 46: 'ingenerate' can mean, *inter alia*, that which could be but never has been generated; in this case it would certainly not imply 'eternal'. I do not assume, however, that Basil knows any of these works by Athanasius at first hand.

[76] *Eun.* 1.10.17–23.

[77] Recall that, in a sense, positive or 'cataphatic' theology played a somewhat similar role for Clement: positive names for the unnameable God keep our mind from straying into entirely unworthy notions.

is no Pseudo-Dionysius, who argues that God is beyond both affirmations and negations. Yet, 'negative theology' can have broader connotations, referring to a whole attitude towards knowledge and its limitations. It can name the awareness of the irreducibly mysterious character of God—and indeed of all reality. In so far as the phrase refers to this, we can see Basil as contributing in important ways to the development of negative theology. Gregory of Nyssa will take up *both* of these approaches to negative theology. Like Basil, he has no room for contradiction in theology: negative terms and positive terms are opposed. And yet, also like Basil, there is a sense in which an apophatic impulse, which goes beyond simply using privative terms, undergirds all of his theology.[78]

Taken together, these five distinctions constitute an interesting response to Eunomius' view that all true predicates for God are synonymous and identical in reference. Basil not only disputes the identity thesis, but he does so by denying that it applies to Eunomius' pet predicate, 'ingenerate'. And he says that 'ingenerate' fails to qualify for the identity thesis (fails to qualify for being identical with the divine substance) in four different ways, corresponding to distinctions (2)–(5). Let us summarize by, as it were, running 'ingenerate' through Basil's gauntlet. 'Ingenerate' cannot be identical with the divine essence (in fact it cannot even be an essential attribute at all), because it only tells us *how* God is, not *what* he is, whereas essences answer the question 'What is it?'; because it is a relative rather than an absolute term, being used interchangeably with 'Father', and relative terms never name essences; because it names a property peculiar to the Father, just as 'generate' names a property peculiar to the Son; but no such properties that distinguish those who share a common essence names the common essence itself; and finally, because it only tells us what God is *not*, namely, subject to generation, whereas all essential attributes name real properties. If one buys the premises, together with the controversial premise that language about God follows a similar logic to ordinary language, then the conclusion to all four arguments should be that 'ingenerate'

[78] See Rowan Williams, 'Lossky, the *via negativa* and the foundations of theology', in idem, *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology* (ed.), Mike Higton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 1–24, esp. at 7–9.

is not an essential attribute of God, even if it is true of God. And with that, Basil has defused the heart of Eunomius' theology, the identity thesis and the centrality of the term 'ingenerate'. However, we have not fully seen yet how Basil positively reconstructs theological epistemology without the identity thesis. How can terms used of a simple God be anything other than synonyms? Moreover, given that we cannot *define* God's very being, can we say nothing at all about it?

6

Basil of Caesarea II: Concepts, Reality, and Reading

CONCEPTUALIZATION (Ἐπίνοια)

The genius of Basil's theological epistemology can be most clearly seen in the deftness by which he recovers the idea that humans develop concepts about God through the process of 'conceptualization'. Aetius and Eunomius argued against conceptualization in texts written prior to Basil's *Against Eunomius*; theirs was a pre-existing opposition to the term. Still, it was certainly Basil's discussion of *epinoia* that provoked Eunomius' ire in his *Apologia Apologiae*, which in turn led Gregory of Nyssa to devote the better part of his lengthy second book *Against Eunomius* to the topic. It has received scholarly attention, but several questions understandably remain open.[1] In this section, I will focus on the plausibility of one line of interpretation that has not been defended in as stark a manner as I will attempt to do. I will argue that the concepts devised through the process of *epinoia* are nothing more than concepts in minds, where this in particular means that they do not depend for their existence or their validity on any features of extra-mental reality.[2] I will label this interpretation 'conceptualism'. Each concept devised through *epinoia* is at least potentially meaningful, but it is not necessary that it have a referent

[1] The best current summary, which includes helpful comment on the philosophical background, is Ayres, *Nicaea*, 191–8; cf. also Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*, 110, 241–3, 247.

[2] I hope the reader will indulge my distinction between mental and extra-mental reality on the grounds that it corresponds well to the assumptions Basil (and his opponents) make, even if the reader is suspicious of whether such language makes sense.

beyond itself. Basil understands that the conditions for meaningfulness are much lower than the conditions for reference.[3] This is significant for my broader purposes in this chapter, for if conceptualism is the correct interpretation of Basil then he has gone some way towards establishing that concepts applied to God can be non-synonymous and true. Put differently, if the interpretation is correct, then he has a way of thinking of God under various concepts without this multiplicity implying anything, positive or negative, about the inherent simplicity of God. Still, I hope to show in the final section of the chapter that the items conceived of by this method only constitute part of the whole sum of (true) concepts humans have of God.

Before considering this interpretation of conceptualization, it is important to get a basic sense of how Basil uses this word. First, the term refers ambiguously both to the mental activity of reflection and to the result of that reflection, the latter of which can also be denoted with the passive verbal noun *νόημα* or one of its compounds.[4] Again, sometimes it can appear to refer not simply to the mental results of reflection (that is, to concepts), but also to the terms used to express these concepts. Also, Basil is somewhat imprecise as to just how similar or different the range of meaning and extension is for the terms *ἐπίνοια* and *ἔννοια*. I think a plausible case can be made that for Basil, the former in its restricted sense denotes what we might call 'second-order' reflection on the latter.[5] Not that they are different in

[3] 'Hippocentaur' is meaningful, but lacks a reference. The condition for meaning is that it makes sense, the condition for reference is the existence of hippocentaurs. Some modern atheist philosophers invoke the same distinction for the concept of God, arguing that while the concept of God makes sense, the term 'God' has no extramental reference.

[4] See Sesboüé's comments on *Eun.* 1.6, SC 299: 182–3 n. 2: "Dans ce texte Basile définit l'*ἐπίνοια* comme l'activité reflexive de l'esprit capable d'abstraction à partir des données de la perception, abstraction qui décompose et recompose rationellement un objet en fonction de ses différents aspects formels. Il s'agit proprement de l'activité conceptuelle de l'esprit. Et comme l'*ἐπίνοια* désigne le plus souvent le résultat de cette activité, nous avons choisi de traduire par *concept*."

[5] Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 112, uses the language of "second-degree" reflection. Cf. the definition of *ἐπίνοια* in Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, "in controversy of Basil and Gr.Nyss. agst. Eunomius, used by former to denote *reflection* on concept already formed". This "concept already formed" in my view is what *ἔννοια* strictly speaking denotes. I do not wish to imply that all *ennoiai* are good, natural or fitting: see *Eun.* 1.10.18, 1.19.22–3. It is the more generic of the two terms.

kind: every idea derived through ἐπίνοια will be an ἔννοια; but not every ἔννοια is based on ἐπίνοια. Ἔννοια is then the more general term, covering any notion, while ἐπίνοια refers precisely to that process of discursive reflection upon other notions. That said, the semantic distinction between the two terms is not always, or even often, clear.[6]

Basil's argument concerning *epinoia* proceeds in four stages. I will comment on these stages in order to assess conceptualism as an interpretation. Throughout the argument, Basil seems concerned with two premises of Eunomius' polemic against *epinoia*: (A) that a title derived through the process of *epinoia* (which title can itself be called an *epinoia*) is a 'mere name': it comes to be and passes away along with the words that express it; and (B) that words that do not refer to essences have no meaning.[7] He is able to respond to both at once, along with Eunomius' claim (C) that names of God are synonymous, by introducing into the debate a *tertium quid* between bare names and objects. This is the mind, with its concepts and meanings.[8] It is here—and, if conceptualism is the right interpretation, here only—that *epinoiai* operate. Let us now proceed through the stages of the argument.

[6] Basil never explicitly distinguishes the terms. This might suggest that my understanding of the distinction between *ennoia* and *epinoia* is overly systematic. However, what would count against my interpretation is if there were passages in which Basil used *epinoia* where he is talking about either a common, natural notion (*ennoia*) or some other usage that requires *ennoia* rather than *epinoia*, and there are to my knowledge none. More importantly, Basil's description of the process of forming *epinoiai*, which I discuss below as I discuss how we form the notion that God is ingenerate, confirms the distinction between basic concepts and reflections upon those concepts. Thus, the semantic distinction I am attributing to Basil is present even if the terminological distinction is less than clear.

[7] Eunomius may have assumed his premise was restricted to simple reality or realities, but in his attack on it, Basil assumes it is a general principle. It could be a general principle, if the conditions for 'meaning' were very high, much like the conditions for genuine *epistêmê* in Plato or Aristotle, perhaps.

[8] This aspect of Basil's argument has been addressed well by Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 108–16. However, Basil is not being quite as original as Rousseau suggests in placing concepts between external things and words: this was already Aristotle's teaching at *Int.* 16a3–8. In Aristotle, it is "affections of the soul" which play this role; in his late ancient commentators (e.g. Ammonius, *Int.* 17.22–6, 18.29–32) these are called "concepts" (νοήματα) and "notions" (τὰς ἐννοίας). I am indebted here to Jonathan Barnes's comments in Schenkeveld and Barnes, 'Language', 194.

Stage One

The first stage is crucial, though sometimes overlooked, for Basil's shift from words to concepts.[9] He attacks Eunomius' premises (A) and (B) with a simple thought experiment. Suppose that there is an *epinoia* that means something (*σημαίνειν τι*), but that this meaning is false and insubstantial (that is, has no external referent), like the centaurs and chimeras of mythology. Now, does this *epinoia*, with its meaning, disappear once its correlative name is spoken? Obviously not: it remains as a concept (*νόημα*) in the mind (*διάνοια*). Therefore (A) and (B) are false. This argument reveals that Basil assumes the conditions for meaning are rather low: even concepts under which no extra-mental entity falls can have a meaning. His word for meaning is *σημαίνειν* and its derivatives (e.g. *τὸ σημαινόμενον* is the 'thing meant' or the 'meaning'). It is important to note that it is the meaning of *concepts* that he is thinking of with this term, not words.

Stage Two

The first stage proves that *epinoiai* are not simply words. The second and third stages try to state more fully what counts as an *epinoia* by focusing on the meaning of the term in "common usage" and in "the divine oracles", respectively.[10] According to Basil, Eunomius has only attended to one class of *epinoiai*—the obviously false inventions of mythology, while overlooking other ways of using the term which are in fact more in keeping with common usage and scripture. Basil turns to the use of *epinoia* in the philosophical *koinê*:

So, we see that in common usage, things that seem to be simple and singular upon a general survey by the mind, but which upon subtle inves-

[9] Corresponding to Sesboüé's first paragraph of *Eun.* 1.6: 1.6.1–18.
[10] *Eun.* 1.6.19–22. Section two, then, is found in 1.6.21–57; section three in 1.7.1–31.

tigation appear diverse and many, these things which are divided by the mind, are said to be divisible by conceptualization alone.[11]

This definition shifts the issue from Eunomius' distinction of real from unreal to an epistemological distinction between *prima facie* appearance and appearance after detailed scrutiny. If anything, it reverses Eunomius' correlation of 'unreal' with conceptualization and real with knowledge by other means, since it is knowledge by conceptualization in this passage that is more subtle and in fact accurate. Basil's terminology here reflects a mixed philosophical pedigree, but I suggest that the mixing was already achieved in Basil's sources. The phrase "upon a general survey" (*ταῖς ἀθρόαις ἐπιβολαῖς*) originates with Epicurus, who uses it to distinguish an overall summary, such as his *Letter to Herodotus* is meant to be, from a more detailed investigation. The notion of the "survey" or "application" (*ἐπιβολή*) of the mind is important in Epicurean epistemology generally. It is also central to what Basil thinks the process of *epinoia* is: he says concepts devised thus are produced "according to various aspects" (*κατὰ διαφόρους ἐπιβολὰς*),[12] and Gregory of Nyssa can signal the theory with the same phrase without mentioning *epinoia*.[13] However, the attempt to link Basil directly with Epicurus has not succeeded,[14] in part because Epicurus' terminology was picked up in other schools, in part because there are closer parallels to the gist of Basil's argument in more proximate Neoplatonic literature. In fact, we find the term *ἐπιβολή* being used for the same purposes in Plotinus and Dexippus.[15]

[11] *Eun.* 1.6.21–5 (SC 299: 184): *Ὁρῶμεν τοίνυν ὅτι ἐν μὲν τῇ κοινῇ χρήσει τὰ ταῖς ἀθρόαις ἐπιβολαῖς τοῦ νοῦ ἁπλᾶ δοκοῦντα εἶναι καὶ μοναχά, ταῖς δὲ κατὰ λεπτὸν ἐξετάσεσι ποικίλα φαινόμενα καὶ πολλὰ ταῦτα τῷ νῷ διαιρούμενα ἐπινοίᾳ μόνῃ διαιρετὰ λέγεται.*

[12] *Eun.* 1.7.36; cf. 1.7.14. From the second to the seventh centuries AD, the exact phrase appears outside of Basil and Gregory only in the following authors: Soranus, *Gyn.* 1.27.2.7; Sextus Emp. *M* 7.222; ibid. 10.2; Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 1.20.98.3.2; Alex. Aphr., *in Metaph.* 384.31; Hermeias, *in Phaedrum* 14.3; Simplicius, *in de an.* 299.13.

[13] e.g. *Adv. Apol.* (GNO 3.1: 136.29); *Eun.* 2.145 (GNO 1: 267.24).

[14] For the attempt, see Kopecek, *History of Neo-Arianism*, 2: 376.

[15] Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.2.4.23; Dexippus, *in Cat.* 2.6 (43 Busse; trans. Dillon, 79); cf. Porphyry, *in Cat.* (101.4, 11 Busse; trans. Strange, 95); Alexander *apud* Simplicius *in de cael.* (672.4 Heiberg); Simplicius, *in de an.* (299.8–14 Hayduck). The last is perhaps the closest parallel, though due to its late date cannot itself be a source (though it may be reporting something that is a source).

Basil provides an example at this stage that seems to undermine conceptualism. He discusses a body, which "the first investigation declares to be simple, but which reason, entering in, shows to be diverse, resolving it by conceptualization into the things from which it is composed, color, shape, resistance, magnitude, and the rest".[16] Surely, the items that "reason" distinguishes here are not mere concepts in the mind of the viewer, but rather are, as Basil explicitly says, the components of the body. However, this does not refute conceptualism, because Basil does not say that these components are merely conceptualizations. He only says that they are resolved *by means of* conceptualization. In other words, "conceptualization" here names the process by which things that are in reality inseparable are separated for analysis. This usage appears also—with the dative case as here—in Plotinus.[17]

Still proceeding through what I am calling the second stage of the argument, Basil gives another definition of *epinoia*, which seems intended to be parallel to the one already cited. But here he switches the terminology from "survey" (ἐπιβολή) to "concept" (νόημα): "conceptualization is the name given to the more subtle and precise reflection about an intellectual object after an initial concept of it has arisen for us from sense- perception".[18] Here, the distinction is between an initial "concept" (νόημα) and additional reflection (ἐπενθύμησις) upon the concept.[19] He provides an example, which shows the significance of the distinction: "For example, the concept of 'grain' exists in everybody as something simple, by means of which we recognize grain as soon as we see it. But when we examine grain in detail we come to consider more things about it, and use different designations to indicate these different objects of thought."[20] As Basil

[16] *Eun.* 1.6.25–9.

[17] *Enn.* 6.2.7.19.

[18] *Eun.* 1.6.41–4.

[19] Some mss. include what Sesboüé's suppresses as a gloss immediately following the quoted phrase: ὅθεν ἡ συνήθεια καλεῖ ἐπιλογισμόν, εἰ καὶ μὴ οἰκείως (SC 299: 186). So, the author of this learned insertion took ἐπιλογισμός as a parallel (if a somewhat improper one) to ἐπίνοια: this may be correct as a comment about the meaning of the latter, even though Sesboüé is correct to excise it.

[20] *Eun.* 1.6.44–7 (SC 299: 186): *Οἷον τοῦ σίτου νόημα μὲν ἁπλοῦν ἐνυπάρχει πᾶσι, καθὸ φανέντα γνωρίζομεν· ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀκριβεῖ περὶ αὐτοῦ ἐξετάσει, θεωρία τε πλειόνων προσέρχεται, καὶ προσηγορίαι διάφοροι τῶν νοηθέντων σημαντικαί.*

explains, these further concepts are fruit, seed, and nourishment. Here, the initial concept has many of the features of 'common notions' and 'preconceptions' in Stoic thought: it is actualized by sense-perception, it is common to all, and it is what makes possible the recognition of an F as F (here, a perceived bit of grain as grain). These are functions of concepts as opposed to words, which vary from language to language. It is also clear that in moving to greater complexity, one is still dealing with concepts: the same term is used for the products of the more subtle reflection as for the initial concept. Basil concludes section two of the argument by saying that things are "considered by conceptualization" which, though they seem simple in substrate, actually admit of a diverse account.[21] The use of "account" (*λόγον*) here is interesting, for it shows that the diverse reflections or applications each have a corresponding account or contribute to a single, complex account. He also says that such things are sense-perceptible. He seems to assume that the common usage of *epinoia* is only concerned with such objects. Eunomius' point is that to transfer this epistemological process to the simple God would be a mistake. Basil does not directly answer this, and it remains a question as to why Basil believes himself to be justified in this move. Still, in the section on "common usage", he has defined the term in such a way that simplicity or complexity of its object is irrelevant. This is because he has defined the process in conceptualist terms.

Stage Three

Stage three of Basil's argument about *epinoia* turns to the usage of *epinoia* in scripture, or more precisely in the tradition of interpreting scripture. Here, Basil is manifestly indebted to Origen's discussion of the titles of Christ in his *Commentary on John*. Like Origen, Basil views the titles Christ gives himself in John's Gospel, such as door, way, bread, vine, shepherd, and light, as conceptualizations. In stage three, Basil follows Origen in speaking in the plural of conceptualizations rather than speaking in the singular as he does in the other

[21] *Eun.* 1.6.54–7 (SC 299: 188). Surely ἐπινοία in line 57 is a misprint for ἐπινοίᾳ.

stages, where 'conceptualization' names a process.[22] Still, even in following Origen's usage, Basil goes beyond him in significant ways. First, he is concerned to deny that Christ is "polyonymous".[23] Origen would likely agree, but he is not concerned with denying it. In order to grasp the force of Basil's denial, we must turn to two earlier texts. In the pseudo-Aristotelian work *De mundo*, we find the word in a theological context: "God being one yet has many names."[24] This refers to the Stoic-influenced theology whereby the various names of the one God are considered to have been devised from the effects of his providence. For example, the author derives the names *Ζῆνα* and *Δία* (names for Zeus) from *ζῆν* and *δι' ὅν*, respectively: together, the names mean 'through whom we live'. Stead has speculated that the Cappadocian doctrine of conceptualizations might owe something to this tradition;[25] if so, it is a negative influence, for Basil is keen to deny it here. More important as a source for Basil must be either Porphyry's *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories* or something like it. There Porphyry sets forth a clear definition of polyonyms, which explains Basil's concern: " . . . polyonyms are things that have several different names, but one and the same account, such as 'sword', 'sabre' and 'blade', and in the case of clothing, 'coat' (*lôpion*) and 'cloak' (*himation*) . . . They are like the Romans, each of whom usually has several names."[26] The reference to Roman names is interesting, for Basil in section four of his argument refers to a biblical polyonym: "And if all these (names of God) extend to one signification, it is entirely necessary that the names mean the same thing as one another, just like in the case of polyonyms, whenever we call the same man Simon and Peter and Cephas."[27] I return to this passage in a

[22] I am indebted to Fr John Behr for clarifying this point for me at a session on Basil's *Contra Eunomium* at the 2008 North American Patristics Society Conference.

[23] *Eun.* 1.7.9; cf. 1.8.27–8.

[24] *De mundo* 401a11–14 (trans. E. S. Forster, in J. Barnes, *Complete Works*): *Εἷς δὲ ὢν πολυώνυμός ἐστι, κατονομαζόμενος τοῖς πάθεσι πᾶσιν ἅπερ αὐτὸς νεοχμοῖ. Καλοῦμεν γὰρ αὐτὸν καὶ Ζῆνα καὶ Δία, παραλλήλως χρώμενοι τοῖς ὀνόμασιν, ὡς κἂν εἰ λέγοιμεν δι' ὃν ζῶμεν.*

[25] Stead, *Divine Substance*, 278.

[26] Porphyry, *in Cat.* (69.1ff. Busse; trans. Strange, 50).

[27] *Eun.*1.8.25–8 (SC 299: 194): *Καὶ εἰ πάντα ταῦτα πρὸς ἓν σημαινόμενον τείνει, ἀνάγκη πᾶσα ταὐτὸν ἀλλήλοις δύνασθαι τὰ ὀνόματα· ὡς ἐπὶ τῶν πολυωνύμων, ὅταν Σίμωνα καὶ Πέτρον καὶ Κηφᾶν τὸν αὐτὸν λέγωμεν*. That Basil understands polyonyms

moment, for now let us note that Basil does not believe that the various names of this apostle have distinct senses.[28] The titles of Christ, by contrast, differ in sense.[29]

Yet, and herein lies the second key difference between Basil and Origen, Basil believes that the diversity of conceptualizations does not impinge upon Christ's simplicity. As we have seen, Origen appears to ground his doctrine of multiple conceptualizations on the fact that the Son is not a simple unity as the Father is. In fact, this may explain why Origen is not concerned with denying that the Son is a polyonym, as Basil is: for Origen, the names can refer to distinct aspects of a non-simple reality.[30] But Basil is clear that the Son is simple:

> But being one in substrate, and one substance, simple and incomposite, he names himself differently at different times, adopting titles which differ from one another in terms of their conceptualizations. On the basis of how his activities differ and how he relates to the objects of his divine benefaction, he employs different names for himself.[31]

One might take the coupling of the doctrine of simplicity with the doctrine of distinct conceptualizations to imply that Basil has an inchoate grasp of a distinction between sense and reference. However, the rationale given for the diversity of conceptualizations in this passage shows that they do not refer to the same item. Nor do they

in Porphyry's sense is further confirmed by *Eun.* 1.7.9–10 (SC 299: 188): . . . *οὐ πολυώνυμός τις ὢν* [sc. Christ]· *οὐ γὰρ πάντα τὰ ὀνόματα εἰς ταὐτὸν ἀλλήλοις φέρει.*

28 Contrast the discussion of sense and reference in modern analytic philosophy stemming from a classic paper by Gottlob Frege. This discussion often uses 'Mark Twain' and 'Samuel Clemens' as examples of terms with distinct sense and identical reference. I return below to the question of whether Basil distinguishes sense and reference.

29 *Eun.* 1.7.10–12; he unpacks their various meanings at lines 17–27; also at *spir.* 8.17.

30 Compare Origen's treatment of the names Simon, Peter, and Cephas in the Gospel of John at *Comm. Jn.* 10.31–3; Heine, *Origen: Commentary . . . Books 1–10*, 262–3. For Origen, the names differ at least in sense, perhaps also in reference. Cf. *Cels.* 1.25–6 for a related debate about naming God.

31 *Eun.* 1.7.12–17 (SC 299: 189–90): *Ἀλλ' ἓν ὢν κατὰ τὸ ὑποκείμενον, καὶ μία οὐσία καὶ ἁπλῆ καὶ ἀσύνθετος, ἄλλοτε ἄλλως ἑαυτὸν ὀνομάζει, ταῖς ἐπινοίαις διαφερούσας ἀλλήλων τὰς προσηγορίας μεθαρμοζόμενος. Κατὰ γὰρ τὴν τῶν ἐνεργειῶν διαφορὰν καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὰ εὐεργετούμενα σχέσιν διάφορα ἑαυτῷ καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα τίθεται.*

refer to inherent properties of God, but only his activities and relation to his creation.[32] It is nonetheless important to note that the conceptualizations are not the aforementioned activities or relation. Rather, they are the concepts humans have of these. Basil's use of Origen's exegetical principle reveals a subtle shift in the direction of conceptualism.

Stage Four

The fourth and final stage of the argument moves from how scriptural names reflect different conceptualizations to how humans develop new ones.[33] It also turns from discussing names of Christ to names of "the God of the universe".[34] Basil argues that even these, or rather, some of them are devised *κατ' ἐπίνοιαν*. Basil in fact turns the tables on Eunomius and says that 'ingenerate' is devised in this way. We can gain a clear picture of how this works by attending to Basil's account of where the notion, and consequently the name 'ingenerate' come from. Like Justin Martyr and unlike Dionysius of Alexandria, Basil thinks we should treat of 'ingenerate' together with 'incorruptible' (or some synonym). Both of these come about when we reflect on the more basic concept of the divine life. When we cast our minds from the current moment of time backwards, we see that it has no beginning, whence arises a concept on the basis of which we develop the title 'ingenerate'. When we mentally survey the future, we see that God's life has no end, and so we name this concept 'incorruptible'. 'Ingenerate' therefore is both a predicate of God *simpliciter* and of

[32] The fact that Basil describes the title "light" as predicated of the Son as a name of the Son's activity towards the creation is somewhat problematic for his claim, discussed below, that light is part of the 'formula of essence' that Father, Son, and Spirit share. However, Basil likely holds, as Gregory of Nyssa does, that there is a category of divine properties that are true of God *in se* and *ad extra*, and that light is one such. In other words, 'light' likely names both what the Son does (he enlightens) and who he is.

[33] The fourth section runs from 1.7.32 to 8.69 (note the difference between how I divide the argument and how Sesboüé does at SC 299: 184 n. 1). I take it that the discussion of scriptural usage ends at 1.7.31.

[34] *Eun.* 1.7.32.

"the fact that [the life of God] has no beginning" (τὸ ἄναρχον αὐτῆς).[35] Clearly, the fact that we devise concepts from a point in time does not imply that God is subject to time. Titles like 'ingenerate' express a truth about the divine life, but they do so from a human point of view (what other point of view is there?). Conceptualism seems to be the only interpretation that fits naturally with Basil's argument about the formation of a term like 'ingenerate' from the idea of the divine life. 'Ingenerate' is solely a second-order notion, a notion about a notion.

The discussion in stage four of the argument is intended to provide further corroboration for Basil's fundamental claim that terms devised through conceptualization are non-synonymous. He summarizes the non-synonymity in *Eun.* 1.8.25–7, a passage already quoted.[36] Here, he states that the various terms we predicate of God would be synonymous if all of them "extend to one meaning" (πάντα ταῦτα πρὸς ἓν σημαινόμενον τείνει). This passage implies that in order for any two conceptualizations to be distinct, it is sufficient that they have different meanings. But diversity of meaning is not sufficient for diversity of reference, as Eunomius assumes. Basil's conceptualizations are entirely mental affairs: the variety one encounters in one's mind should not be projected onto the object of one's thinking.

In sum, with his account of conceptualization, Basil has found a way to rebut Eunomius' polemic against it. One might think that the two are talking past each other, that they are equivocating on the meaning of *epinoia*, with Eunomius using it of fictitious mental constructs, and Basil using it more broadly. However, by shifting his concern to concepts and meanings (rather than just words and external objects), Basil's argument works for both fictitious conceptualizations and others which he takes to be true, such

[35] These lines are a summary of the argument of *Eun.* 1.7.35–44 (SC 299: 192). That Basil conceives of 'ingenerate' as a predicate of 'life', that is, as a concept that follows from the more basic concept of divine life, is confirmed by *Eun.* 2.29.20 (SC 305: 122): . . . παρεπόμενον δὲ ἔχει ἡ ζωὴ τὸ ἀγεννητον . . . ("the life has ingeneracy as a concomitant"). This was noticed by David L. Balás, but wrongly attributed to Eunomius himself as well as to Basil: *ΜΕΤΟΥΣΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ: Man's Participation in God's Perfections According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa* (Rome: Herder & Herder, 1966), 127.

[36] At n. 27 above.

as ingeneracy as a second-order reflection on the divine life. Eunomius appears to have no reason for restricting the process of concept-formation to fictitious instances. Basil shows that conceptualizations are not mere words, that they can be meaningful without delineating the essence of an external referent, and that they can be meaningfully predicated of a single, even a simple object, without being synonymous.

One might assume that Basil thinks that all theological thinking happens by way of conceptualization, but this would be mistaken. Conceptualization is a process of reflecting on other concepts, which are somehow more basic. In the next section, I will turn to these concepts, which are concepts of the essential properties of God. Thus far in the chapter, we have observed what is almost entirely a rear-guard action: Basil's theological epistemology is to a large extent a negative doctrine of simplicity, an account of what simplicity does not imply. It does not imply that everything that we can meaningfully say about God names the divine essence. We will see that simplicity has positive implications for Basil when we turn to his understanding of God's essential properties, the properties which one predicates as the λόγος τῆς οὐσίας for God, even though a full account of the divine *ousia* remains impossible for human minds.

SIMPLICITY AND THE UNITY OF GOD

Thus far, we have seen that, for Basil, saying that God is simple is compatible with a vast complexity in theological language. Given the distinctions Basil has drawn and his understanding of *epinoia*, this is not really troubling, since the terms we have looked at thus far can be viewed as not directly naming intrinsic properties of God. It would be easy for Basil to have claimed that no term whatsoever refers to the divine substance. And it is easy for us to read his claims not to know 'what God is' as saying just that. But Basil believes he can speak of Father and Son—the case of the Spirit is less clear, given Basil's notorious reticence—as sharing a common "formula of substance" (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας) and "formula of being" (λόγος τοῦ εἶναι). He speaks of this sharing as the "commonality of substance" (τὸ κοινὸν

τῆς οὐσίας).[37] The shared formula of substance is the sense in which the deity is one for Basil.[38] And this 'formula' is not left vague; rather, Basil uses a number of terms as common to the persons: goodness, power, light, and life. But there are problems in accounting for this multiplicity of terms. Eunomius held all the terms predicated of the divine substance to be synonyms with 'ingenerate', and ingeneracy to be identical with the divine essence. Basil cannot take these routes. But what then can he say? He introduces the notion of the 'formula of substance' to account for divine unity. Yet, as Basil explicates this formula, it begins to appear that even the unity of God is complex. How can the divine substance be a simple unity and be described under multiple aspects? How do the aspects relate to one another? How do they relate to the substance? To these problems we now turn.

To say that any term contributes to the formula of substance is simply to say that it is predicated of the substance, rather than some other feature. Given Basil's agnosticism about the divine substance or essence, one might expect him to offer no such predicates. But this is not the case, and in fact we should take his agnosticism about substance as agnosticism about definition. And this brings him in line with at least some Neoplatonists. Plotinus, for instance, says, "But in general it is impossible to say what substance is: for even if one gives it its 'proper characteristic' (τὸ ἴδιον), it does not yet have its 'what it is' (τὸ τί ἐστι)."[39] Although Plotinus is talking about 'substance' as a categorical name here, rather than about such-and-such's substance, his distinction corresponds exactly to Basil's distinction between offering a definition of a common substance and offering certain properties of that common substance (which is not to be confused with the distinction between common and particular: as we saw above, both common and particular have distinguishing properties). It is entirely possible for Basil to be consistent in, on the one hand, offering descriptions of the common divine substance, and, on the other, holding it to be incapable of being defined. These

[37] *Eun.* 1.19.27–44.

[38] Ibid., lines 40–1 (SC 299: 242): *Κατὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ θεότης μία· δηλονότι κατὰ τὸν τῆς οὐσίας λόγον τῆς ἑνότητος νοουμένης.*

[39] *Enn.* 6.1.2.15–16, trans. Armstrong (LCL 445: 17).

descriptions name proper characteristics or propria, but not definitions, of the divine substance.[40]

Basil's fullest discussion of these descriptions comes at *Against Eunomius* 2.29, where they are directly linked with divine simplicity. The passage is worth quoting at length, for it sets forth in a nutshell the positive doctrine of simplicity that he and Gregory of Nyssa put forth over against Eunomius and the identity thesis.

Moreover, in response to the objection that God will be revealed as composite unless the light is understood as the same thing as ingeneracy, we have the following to say: if we should understand ingeneracy as part of the substance, then there would be room for the argument which claims that what is compounded from different things is composite. But if we should posit, on the one hand, the light, or the life, or the good as the substance of God, claiming that the very thing which God is is life as a whole, light as a whole, and good as a whole, while, on the other hand, we should posit that the life has ingeneracy as a concomitant, then how is the one who is simple in substance not incomposite? For surely the ways of indicating his proprium will not violate the account of simplicity.[41]

In this passage, Basil responds to Eunomius' claim that 'light' is identical with 'ingenerate' by sketching an account of how one can have non-identical (i.e. non-synonymous) substantial predicates without this harming simplicity. He does this at the same time that he reinforces his account of ingeneracy as a conceptualization that follows the notion of the divine life. The argument turns on the distinction between 'as a part' and 'as a whole'. If someone were to say 'God, or more precisely, the divine substance is F, but only in part', then that person would obviously be negating divine simplicity.

[40] See, again, the distinction Basil draws at *Eun.* 2.9.26–7 between expressing *τὴν οὐσίαν* and expressing *ἰδιώματα . . . τινα περὶ αὐτήν*. In the passage we are about to examine, Basil says that these terms indicate God's proper characteristic: *δεικτικοὶ τῆς ἰδιότητος αὐτοῦ*.

[41] *Eun.* 2.29.13–23 (SC 305: 122): *Ἀλλὰ μὴν πρός γε τὸ σύνθετον ἀναφανήσεσθαι τὸν θεόν, εἰ μὴ ταὐτὸν ληφθείη τῷ ἀγεννήτῳ τὸ φῶς, ἐκεῖνο εἰπεῖν ἔχομεν, ὅτι εἰ μὲν ὡς μέρος τῆς οὐσίας τὸ ἀγέννητον ἐλαμβάνομεν, εἶχεν ἂν αὐτοῦ χώραν ὁ λόγος σύνθετον εἶναι λέγων τὸ ἐκ διαφόρων συγκείμενον· εἰ δὲ οὐσίαν μὲν Θεοῦ τὸ φῶς τιθέμεθα ἢ ζωὴν ἢ τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὅλον ὅπερ ἐστὶ ζωὴν ὄντα, καὶ ὅλον φῶς, καὶ ὅλον ἀγαθόν, παρεπόμενον δὲ ἔχει ἡ ζωὴ τὸ ἀγέννητον, πῶς οὐκ ἀσύνθετος ὁ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν ἁπλοῦς; Οὐ γὰρ δὴ οἱ δεικτικοὶ τῆς ἰδιότητος αὐτοῦ τρόποι τὸν τῆς ἁπλότητος λόγον παραλυπήσουσιν·*

Ingeneracy is not primarily predicated of the divine substance.[42] But it is a logical consequence, an *epinoia*, of an item that Basil does predicate of the divine substance, the life of God. The life, as well as the light and the goodness of God, are predicates of the substance as a whole. This does not mean that the divine substance is a whole (it is not even a homoiomerous whole), but rather means that these names do not refer to one aspect of it while failing to refer to another.

Basil is implicitly denying that God has essential complements (*sumplêrôtika tês ousias*), a point we have encountered in Athanasius and Eunomius. Such complements were considered to be parts of a substance, so that if one were removed, then the whole would perish. The fact that Basil takes pains to deny this is significant, for it is precisely the position that Eunomius attributes to him when he writes his *Apology for the Apology*.[43] Eunomius thinks that terms derived through conceptualization, on Basil's account, name a part of the more fundamental concepts from which they are derived. For instance, since ingeneracy is the concept that we devise by thinking about the divine life and, as it were, looking backwards in time, it only names part of the divine life. The other part will not, then, be ingenerate. This is to miss the point completely. Ingeneracy is not a predicate of the divine substance itself at any rate. But even the concepts which Basil predicates directly of the essence, life, light, and goodness, do not name parts of that substance. This is presented as a direct inference from simplicity.

[42] This requires some clarification. According to a basic notion of predication, Basil obviously does predicate ingeneracy of the divine substance: cf. *Eun.* 1.11.12–14: "I myself would also say that the substance of God is ingenerate, but not that ingeneracy is the substance." What I mean to deny is what Basil denies in the second part of this sentence. We may be able to speak of the substance of God as ingenerate, but it is not that property. By contrast, it *is* the property of being good, light, and alive (even if it is more than this). The linguistic marker for this distinction is the definite article: adjectives (or nouns like 'light' and 'life') with the article signify the property—e.g. the good or goodness. So, *τὸ ἀγέννητον ἡ οὐσία τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστι* would mean that ingeneracy is the substance. But adjectives (or, again, certain nouns) without the article refer to predicates. So, *ἀγέννητος ἡ οὐσια τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστι* would mean that the substance is ingenerate. The latter is a much weaker claim ontologically and would, I hope, be unobjectionable to any Christian (or any other theist) who is prepared to speak of God as being or having an essence or substance.

[43] See Eunomius, *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.499 (GNO 1: 371–2); 2.504 (GNO 1: 373).

So then, Basil envisions a set of coextensive properties predicated of the divine substance. The fact that they are predicated of the divine substance, rather than of some other concept, implies that these terms have an extra-mental referent. In other words, conceptualism would be an incorrect interpretation of light, life, and goodness, even though these properties have corresponding mental concepts. Basil and Gregory can speak of the 'concept (*ennoia*) of the life of God', but the life of God itself is not a concept. This seemingly trivial point is of prime importance for our study. It is all well and good to say that we have multiple, distinct ideas of God that are nothing more than ideas in our minds devised through conceptualization; surely this does not violate simplicity (though if Eunomius is right it violates the truth of the ideas). But, to say that there are multiple properties of God's simple substance (goodness, light, life), each of which characterizes that substance as a whole, is a significant claim. Are we to conceive of these as actually distinct properties? How do they relate to the divine substance?

Basil is less than explicit on this point, so let us begin by analyzing the notion of having a property 'as a whole'. From 'God's substance is good as a whole' and 'God's substance is light as a whole', it does not follow either that goodness is identical with light or that goodness or light is identical with the divine substance. All that follows is that goodness and light are coextensive properties. And Basil's clearest explicit statement on the matter, brief though it is, confirms this. In his late text, *On the Holy Spirit*, he states that "goodness of will, which, since it is concurrent with the substance, is considered to be similar and equal, or rather, identical in the Father and the Son".[44] The identity claim at the end of the sentence is about the sharing of Father and Son in the goodness of will, that is, it confirms that we are dealing with goodness as a common term or a *logos tês ousias*. What primarily concerns us here is Basil's claim that goodness of will is "concurrent" (*σύνδρομον*) with the divine substance. This is different from saying it is identical with that substance. Basil himself appears to recognize this distinction between

[44] *Spir.* 8.21.3–4 (SC 17 bis: 318): *τὸ ἀγαθὸν τοῦ θελήματος, ὅπερ σύνδρομον ὂν τῇ οὐσίᾳ, ὅμοιον καὶ ἴσον, μᾶλλον δὲ ταὐτὸν ἐν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ θεωρεῖται.* See Porphyry, *Sententiae* 32.72 (338 Brisson) for an interestingly similar use of *σύνδρομ*—for the relation of the 'paradeigmatic' virtues that inhere in *nous* to *nous*' essence: *Τέτταρα τοίνυν ἀρετῶν γένη πέφυκεν, ὧν αἱ μὲν ἦσαν τοῦ νοῦ, αἱ παραδειγματικαὶ καὶ σύνδρομοι αὐτοῦ τῇ οὐσίᾳ* . . . Cf. also *Sent.* 32.90.

"concurrent with" and "identical to" in *Against Eunomius* in the context of discussing Eunomius' doctrine of simplicity.[45]

We can gain a better understanding of what Basil means by "concurrent with the (divine) substance" if we examine parallel uses of the same phrase in late ancient Greek authors. As we will see, this became a relatively common way of expressing the *necessary* connection between some substance and its natural activity, power, or property. The use of *σύνδρομον* together with the dative of *οὐσία* occurs for the first time in extant Greek literature in two fragments of Alexander of Aphrodisias, which are preserved by John Philoponus.[46] In these, Alexander is commenting on Aristotle's famous discussion of 'active intelligence' at *De Anima* 3.5. Alexander uses the language of 'concurrence' to describe the relationship of this intelligence to its actuality: "Active intelligence has an actuality which is concurrent with (its) substance; this is proper to God alone."[47] Aristotle does not use the term *σύνδρομον* for this relationship: in fact, he thinks that the active intelligence, since it is pure actuality, is identical with its thinking. Alexander is not denying this identity claim; he is merely stating that, in the case of God and only in that case, the substance *necessarily* possesses its own actualization or fulfilment.

And this is the sense of the term in a range of other authors, whether they are using it for God, intelligence, or even mundane realities. Plotinus says of the One that "his willing to be himself by his own agency is concurrent with his being what he wills, and his will and he are one".[48] Porphyry uses the term to describe the relation of

[45] Cf. *Eun.* 2.32, lines 18–20 and 31–2. It is, however, less than clear in the text that "being concurrent with" and "being identical to" are actually different states. Since this is merely a dialectical argument against Eunomius, Basil need not be precise. Since Eunomius holds the identity thesis, which implies the concurrent thesis, he can invoke either. It is enough for my purposes that he recognizes a terminological distinction. I return to this passage below, in my discussion of divine power.

[46] This claim is based on a TLG search for *συνδρομ*—within one line of _*ουσι*—in authors from the 5th c. BC to the 6th c. AD.

[47] Alexander Fr. 16d Moraux (=Philoponus, *In de an.* 535.24–5 Hayduck): *τῇ οὐσίᾳ σύνδρομον ἔχειν τὴν ἐνέργειαν τὸν ἐνεργείᾳ νοῦν, ὅπερ μόνῳ θεῷ οἰκεῖον*; cf. Lines 28–9: *θεοῦ γὰρ μόνον οἰκεῖον τὸ σύνδρομον ἔχειν τῇ οὐσίᾳ τὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὸ ἀεὶ ἐνεργεῖν.*

[48] *Enn.* 6.8.13.29 (trans. Armstrong in LCL 7: 271): *καὶ σύνδρομος αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ θέλων αὐτὸς εἶναι καὶ τοῦτο ὤν, ὅπερ θέλει, καὶ ἡ θέλησις καὶ αὐτὸς ἕν.*

the intelligible, paradigmatic virtues to their possessor, *nous*: "So then, it has become clear that there are four classes of virtues: those of the intellect, which act as paradigms and are concurrent with its substance . . . ".[49] A number of late Neoplatonists use the phrase for exactly Alexander's purposes: to state the relation between *ousia* and *energeia* (activity, actuality) among intelligible beings.[50] But it is not only used for intelligible realities: the fifth-century philosopher Hierocles explains that the heroes come to be as sons of the gods, not by "mortal intercourse", but "like a light which is concurrent with the substance of the illuminating body".[51] Similarly, Simplicius says that "at the same time that the fire came to be, it possessed upward movement as a concurrent with its substance".[52] To summarize, we find Basil's phrase *σύνδρομον . . . τῇ οὐσίᾳ* and synonyms being used by late ancient philosophers for the relation between *nous* and its actuality, between the Neoplatonic One and its volition (or its analogue of what we call volition), and between a simple body such as fire and its light, as well as its upward motion, that is, between fire's substance and its inherent powers.

What kind of relations are these? In each case, the two items stand in a necessary relationship, such that if one exists, so does the other. If there is fire, there is light; if (*ex hypothesi*) there is light, there is fire. The relation is also simultaneous: there is no moment when fire does not illuminate or travel upwards. But, despite this close relation, it would be mistaken to say that 'being fire' and 'being light' or 'being the element that moves upwards' are the same properties. They always go together, but they are not identical with one another. The

[49] *Sent.* 32.72 (338 Brisson; trans. Dillon 812, modified for consistency): *Τέτταρα τοίνυν ἀρετῶν γένη πέφυκεν, ὧν αἱ μὲν ἦσαν τοῦ νοῦ, αἱ παραδειγματικαὶ καὶ σύνδρομοι αὐτοῦ τῇ οὐσίᾳ* . . . Cf. also *Sent.* 32.90.

[50] Ammonius, *in de int.* (7.6, 243.1–2 Busse); Proclus, *in Alcib.* (278.11 Westerink); idem, *in Parm.* (742.2, 843.32 Cousin); idem, *in Tim.* (1:12.24, 3:104.5, 3:196.19 Diehl); Damascius, *De prin.* (1:23.10, 140.20–4, 152.18, 311.13 Ruelle); Ps.-Simplicius, *in de an.* (15.30–1, 220.32 Hayduck); Asclepius, *in Metaph.* (119.30–3, 194.21 Hayduck).

[51] Hierocles, *In aurem carmen* 3.8.5: *ὅθεν καὶ θεῶν παῖδες οἱ ἥρωες εἰκότως ἐπευφημοῦνται, οὐκ ἐκ θνητῆς συνουσίας αὐτοῖς γενόμενοι, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τῆς μονοειδοῦς αὐτῶν αἰτίας προϊόντες οἷον φῶς τῇ οὐσίᾳ τοῦ φωτεινοῦ σώματος σύνδρομον* . . .

[52] Simplicius, *in Phys.* (1133.26 Diels): *ἅμα τε πῦρ γίνεται καὶ σύνδρομον ἴσχει τῇ οὐσίᾳ τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄνω φοράν.*

case is less clear with the Neoplatonic theories of *nous* and the One. These two are held to be identical with whatever they possess or with their activity. The terminology of 'concurrence' can be used for either relations of identity or of non-identical, but necessarily coextensive items. Neither interpretation is constrained by the mere appearance of the term.

Immediately after the passage from *Contra Eunomium* Book Two quoted above, Basil explains the polemical implications of his account:

> Otherwise all the things said about God will indicate to us that God is composite. And it seems that if we are going to preserve the notion of simplicity and partlessness, there are two options. Either (1) we will not claim anything about God except that he is unbegotten, and we will refuse to name him invisible, incorruptible, immutable, maker, creator, and all the names we now use for his glorification. Or, (2) if we do admit these names, what will we make of them? Shall we (2.a) apply all of them to the substance? If so, we will demonstrate not only that he is composite, but also that he is compounded from unlike parts, because different things are signified by each of these names. Or shall we (2.b) take them as external to the substance? So, whatever account of attribution they conceive of for each of these names, they should apply the designation "unbegotten" in the same way.[53]

The passage is characteristically Basilian in its argument from doxology. It is possible to read Basil as suggesting that the terms listed here, which are used to "glorify" God, form a set distinct from those he has just been discussing, which indicate the divine proprium. Basil would then be suggesting that doxological titles are "external to the substance" in a way that those which indicate the proprium are not. But this is less than clear. At any rate, the argument is clearly one

[53] *Eun.* 2.29.23–36 (SC 305: 122–4): *ἢ οὕτω γε πάντα ὅσα περὶ Θεοῦ λέγεται σύνθετον τὸν Θεὸν ἡμῖ ἀναδείξει. Καὶ, ὡς ἔοικεν, εἰ μέλλοιμεν τὴν τοῦ ἁπλοῦ καὶ ἀμεροῦς ἔννοιαν διασῴζειν, ἢ οὐδὲν ἐροῦμεν περὶ Θεοῦ πλὴν τὸ ἀγέννητον, καὶ παραιτησόμεθα αὐτὸν ὀνομάζειν ἀόρατον, ἄφθαρτον, ἀναλλοίωτον, δημιουργόν, κριτήν, καὶ πάντα ὅσα νῦν εἰς δοξολογίαν παραλαμβάνομεν· ἢ δεχόμενοι τὰ ὀνόματα ταῦτα, τί καὶ ποιήσομεν; οὐκοῦν οὐχὶ μόνον σύνθετον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἀνομοιομερῶν αὐτὸν συγκείμενον ἀποδείξομεν, διὰ τὸ ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο ὑφ᾽ ἑκάστου τούτων τῶν ὀνομάτων σημαίνεσθαι. Ἀλλ᾽ ἔξω τῆς οὐσίας ἐκληψόμεθα; ὅνπερ ἂν τοίνυν ἐπ᾽ ἐκείνων ἑκάστου λόγον ἐπινοήσωσι, τοῦτον καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ ἀγεννήτου προσηγορίας καταδειξάσθωσαν.*

from the practice of speaking of God with a wide range of terms in Christian worship. If Eunomius takes option (1), then he leaves us with a God whom we cannot worship. In fact, he leaves us with an utter inability to speak about God with any term but one, 'ingenerate'. If Eunomius takes option (2.a), however, and admits the 'doxological' titles into the divine substance, then, according to Basil, he violates simplicity by denying God's purity and making God's substance a mixture. The variety of meanings of these terms would necessarily make God composite out of dissimilar properties. This argument will recur throughout Gregory of Nyssa's works—in fact we may fairly think of it as Gregory's fundamental argument against Eunomius that Eunomius violates divine simplicity by undermining God's purity. Basil leaves option (2.b) unexplained. It is almost certainly the option he prefers. But it is unclear whether being "external to the substance" is meant to apply only to the kind of titles he has listed here or to all words used of God. It would be odd if he intended the latter, since he has just predicated such terms as 'light' and 'life' of the divine *ousia*. But he also uses the term *ousia* in *Against Eunomius* to mean the definition of God, the account of what God is, and distinguishes this from the proprium of God.[54] Much depends, then, on which sense of *ousia* Basil intends to exclude these properties from.

Divine Attributes as Propria and the Problem of Essential Complements

We can be more precise about how properties relate to the divine nature if we examine Basil's major cosmological text, his homilies *On the Hexaemeron*. Basil discusses properties and natures in the course of explaining why the text of Genesis says that "God called the dry land 'earth'" (and not vice versa). I quote the passage at length, since it contains much of the technical language that underlies Basil's and Gregory's understanding of the divine attributes. For Basil, God is said to call dry land 'earth'

[54] *Eun.* 2.9.26–7.

because dry land is the proprium—that which, so to speak, characterizes the nature of the subject—whereas 'earth' is merely a title of the item. For just as rationality is proper to humanity, whereas the term 'human' signifies the animal to which the property belongs, in the same way dryness is proper and unique to earth. So then, whatever properly possesses dryness is entitled 'earth', just as whatever properly possesses neighing is entitled 'horse'. This is true not only of earth. Rather, each of the other elements has a quality that peculiarizes it and picks it out. Through this quality, it is distinguished from the others and each is recognized as being the sort of thing it is. Water has coldness as its proper quality, air has wetness, and fire has heat.[55]

After explaining how these elements combine, Basil returns to his exegetical point:

What I've said expresses the reason why God called the dry land 'earth' rather than entitling the earth 'dry land'. For dryness is not one of the properties that supervenes upon earth later, but is one of those which from the beginning completes its substance. And those things that provide the very cause of being are prior in nature to those which accrue subsequently and are more valuable than them.[56]

Dryness is part of what it means to be that element which we call earth; it was fitting for the text to describe it first as 'dry land' and to say that God gave this the name 'earth'. Being dry land is the proprium of earth and as such is an essential complement of it. To grasp the significance of this, one must distinguish four items that Basil refers to in this passage:

[55] Basil, *hex.* 4.5 (SC 26: 264–6): *Ὅτι ἡ μὲν ξηρὰ τὸ ἰδίωμά ἐστι, τὸ οἱονεὶ χαρακτηριστικὸν τῆς φύσεως τοῦ ὑποκειμένου, ἡ δὲ γῆ προσηγορία τίς ἐστι ψιλὴ τοῦ πράγματος. Ὡς γὰρ τὸ λογικὸν ἴδιόν ἐστι τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ἡ δὲ ἄνθρωπος φωνὴ σημαντική ἐστι τοὺ ζῴου ᾧ ὑπάρχει τὸ ἴδιον· οὕτω καὶ τὸ ξηρὸν ἴδιόν ἐστι τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐξαίρετον. Ὠ τοίνυν ἰδίως ὑπάρχει τὸ ξηρόν, τοῦτο ἐπικέκληται γῆ· ὥσπερ ᾧ ἰδίως πρόσεστι τὸ χρεμετιστικόν, τοῦτο ἐπικέκληται ἵππος. Οὐ μόνον δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἔστι τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων στοιχείων ἕκαστον ἰδιάζουσαν καὶ ἀποκεκληρωμένην ἔχει ποιότητα, δι' ἧς τῶν τε λοιπῶν ἀποκρίνεται, καὶ αὐτὸ ἕκαστον ὁποῖόν ἐστιν ἐπιγινώσκεται. Τὸ μὲν ὕδωρ ἰδίαν ποιότητα τὴν ψυχρότητα ἔχει· ὁ δὲ ἀὴρ τὴν ὑγρότητα· τὸ δὲ πῦρ τὴν θερμότητα.*

[56] Ibid. (268–70): *Ταῦτά μοι εἴρηται παριστῶντι τὴν αἰτίαν δι' ἣν ὁ Θεὸς τὴν ξηρὰν ἐκάλεσε γῆν, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ τὴν γῆν προσεῖπε ξηράν. Διότι τὸ ξηρὸν οὐχὶ τῶν ὕστερον προσγινομένων ἐστὶ τῇ γῇ, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς συμπληρούντων αὐτῆς τὴν οὐσίαν. Τὰ δὲ αὐτὴν τοῦ εἶναι αἰτίαν παρέχοντα, πρότερα τῇ φύσει τῶν μετὰ ταῦτα προσγινομένων καὶ προτιμότερα.*

(1) the proprium or proper quality,
(2) mere titles,
(3) things which accrue subsequently, and
(4) essential complements.

Basil either explicitly claims or implies the following points: that (1) and (4) are the same category, that the dryness of earth and the rationality of humans fall under (1) and hence also under (4), and that 'earth' and 'humanity' fall under (2). The first of these claims (the identity of (1) and (4)) deserves some comment. Basil's account of essential complements is subtle. His distinction between qualities that accrue subsequently (3) and qualities that are essential complements (4) reflects some engagement—however mediated—with a claim Aristotle makes at *Metaphysics Δ*14: "Quality, then, seems to have practically two meanings, and one of these is the more proper. The primary quality is the differentia of substance . . . Secondly, there are modifications of things in motion *qua* in motion, and the differentiae of movements."[57] As this distinction got picked up in late ancient discussions, qualities of the former kind, the substance-making *differentiae* (which are really not qualities at all), were called "essential complements".[58] It is this distinction that lies at the heart of Plotinus' discussion in *Ennead* 2.6 of the ambiguity of the category of quality when applied to sensible objects: the same item can be both a quality (and therefore an accident) in one item and part of the substance of another item—for instance, whiteness in Socrates and in white lead. The dryness of earth, on Basil's account (which is itself influenced by Aristotle), is a 'quality' in the latter sense. Other things besides earth may be dry—even other elements, like fire—but in those cases dryness will be accidental; in the case of earth, dryness is part of the substance. It "characterizes the nature of the subject". We can see from this how propria are distinct from

[57] *Metaph.* 1020b13–18 (trans. W. D. Ross, in J. Barnes (ed.), *Complete Works*, 2: 1611): *σχεδὸν δὴ κατὰ δύο τρόπους λέγοιτ᾽ ἂν τὸ ποιόν, καὶ τούτων ἕνα τὸν κυριώτατον· πρώτη μὲν γὰρ ποιότης ἡ τῆς οὐσίας διαφορά . . . τὰ δὲ <τὰ> πάθη τῶν κινουμένων ᾗ κινούμενα, καὶ αἱ τῶν κινήσεων διαφοραί.*

[58] e.g. Plotinus, *Enn.* 2.6.2.2–5: *Πρῶτον οὖν ἐκεῖνο ζητητέον, εἰ τὸ αὐτὸ θετέον ὁτὲ μὲν ποιὸν μόνον, ὁτὲ δὲ συμπληροῦν οὐσίαν, οὐ δυσχεράναντας ποιὸν συμπληρωτικὸν οὐσίας εἶναι, ἀλλὰ ποιᾶς μᾶλλον οὐσίας.*

accidents: unlike accidents, they inhere in a subject necessarily, that is, by virtue of that subject's nature. Consequently, Basil would be on the side of those late ancient philosophers who held propria to be a distinct class from accidents, and implicitly opposed to those who folded them into a single class. Indeed, one possible reason why Basil's and Gregory's version of simplicity was not taken up in later tradition is that commentators on Porphyry's *Isagoge* such as Boethius construed propria as accidents.[59] But this is not a necessary move and relies entirely on a disjunctive argument: every predicate is either substantial or non-substantial (i.e. accidental); only terms stating genus, species, and difference are substantial; therefore terms naming propria name accidents. It is the second premise restricting what counts as a substantial predicate to definitional parts that is controversial. This is not a necessary interpretation of the language of propria: to be sure, they are non-definitional; but it is at least plausible that not everything non-definitional is accidental. At least, this reading of propria should not be read into Basil and Gregory. Much depends on what is meant by 'accident': Basil's classification rules out non-necessary accidents ("the things which accrue subsequently") as substantial, but may not suffice to cover necessary or *per se* accidents. He and Gregory work with an opposition between necessary and non-necessary features of a subject. This allows propria to be substantial at least in the sense that propria are necessary; yet, it may let too much into this class, including *per se* accidents. Basil and Gregory do not to my knowledge address this issue.

In the passage above, Basil clearly assumes that essential complements (4) and unique properties or propria (1) belong to the same class, at least for the items under discussion like the elements and human beings. One could infer that Basil believes there is some one quality, peculiar to an item, which makes it what it is and thereby constitutes its essence. But this neither makes sense nor accords with the text. There need to be more qualities than dryness for earth to be earth, and Basil clearly assumes that there are. We can confirm the latter point not only from the second paragraph quoted above, but also by looking at the first homily *On the Hexaemeron*, where he lists

[59] See Jonathan Barnes, *Porphyry: Introduction*, 309–10 and the literature cited in n. 19.

"blackness, coldness, heaviness, density, its inherent tasty qualities".[60] He says that "all the things that are considered in connection with [earth] are ranked in the formula of its being and are essential complements".[61] This is a clear statement of the 'bundle theory' of substance which Basil and Gregory (at least at times) endorse. It implies that *all* the 'qualities' that go together to make up an item are essential complements and are part of its formula of being or substance. Take any one of them away and you will destroy the whole.

What does this imply about the language of propria? There seem to be two incompatible accounts in Basil's *Hexaemeron.* In the passage we have analysed from the fourth homily, Basil envisions a distinction between an item's propria, which contribute to its substance, and other qualities which do not. The latter, in context, are the propria of other items. Earth is cold, but coldness is properly a proprium of water. So, coldness does not complete earth's substance, since it is not the peculiar quality of earth. But in the first homily, it does complete earth's substance, as do all earth's qualities.

However, the inconsistency is merely apparent, since Basil includes a qualification in the fourth homily's theory—the theory that only the distinctive quality of an item contributes to its substance. He says that this only applies to "the primary elements of composite bodies", that is, to the elements in themselves.[62] As for actual bodies which can be perceived in the world, these are always seen with their primary qualities combined with the qualities of other elements: earth's dryness is always linked with coldness, blackness, heaviness, and so forth. Sensible elements have all these qualities in their formula of substance; the primary or primitive elements (which may be purely theoretical entities) do not. Of the former, he says: "nothing that is visible and perceptible is absolutely unitary, simple, or unmixed".[63] Presumably the latter are simple: it was common since Aristotle to refer to the elements as 'simple bodies'.

[60] *Hex.* 1.8 (SC 26: 120–2): *τὸ μέλαν, τὸ ψυχρόν, τὸ βαρύ, τὸ πυκνόν, τὰς κατὰ γεῦσιν ἐνυπαρχούσας αὐτῇ ποιότητας.*

[61] Ibid. (120): *πάντα τὰ περὶ αὐτὴν θεωρούμενα εἰς τὸν τοῦ εἶναι κατατέτακται λόγον, συμπληρωτικὰ τῆς οὐσίας ὑπάρχοντα.*

[62] *Hex.* 4.5 (SC 26: 266).

[63] *Hex.* 4.5 (SC 26: 266): *Καὶ οὐδὲν ἀπολελυμένως ἐστὶ μοναχὸν οὐδὲ ἁπλοῦν καὶ εἰλικρινὲς τῶν ὁρωμένων καὶ αἰσθητῶν·*

I have laboured this point because of its relevance for the theory of divine attributes developed by Basil and Gregory. Just like 'dry land' in the element earth, Basil predicates 'light', 'life', and 'goodness' of the divine substance. He also says these terms indicate the divine "proprium" (*ἰδιότης*), like dry land is the proprium or peculiar quality of earth—that is, earth the primitive element, not visible earth.[64] Does the same logic apply to the divine attributes as to the qualities of the elements, or at least a similar logic? He uses similar terminology for the divine attributes and the attributes of the elements. The following passage from Basil's *Homily* 326 (15 in the traditional numbering) 'On Faith' makes the analogy quite explicit. He first lists scripture passages that call God's Spirit "good", "righteous", and the "Spirit of life". He then comments on this scriptural language:

> None of these has been acquired by him, nor do they belong to him as something that supervenes later. Rather, just as heating is inseparable from fire and illuminating from light, in the same way too are sanctifying, giving life, goodness, and righteousness inseparable from the Spirit.[65]

So the properties of the divine nature are analogous to the propria of the elements: they are not acquired by the nature, do not accrue subsequently to it, and are inseparable from it. As we have seen, he explicitly calls the element's propria "essential complements". And yet the doctrine of simplicity is supposed to rule out essential complements. In fact, by saying that each of these attributes names the divine substance "as a whole", Basil implicitly denies that they are essential complements. But this seems question-begging now: if such strikingly similar language is used for the elements' properties and God's, what differentiates the two sets such that elemental properties constitute the substance they characterize, whereas divine properties do not?

Basil seems not to have considered this objection in relation to the divine attributes, but he did address it in a Pneumatological context.

[64] See above, nn. 41, 55–6.

[65] *Hom.* 326 (PG 31: 469.3–8): *Τούτων οὐδὲν ἐπίκτητον αὐτῷ, οὐδὲ ὕστερον ἐπιγενόμενον πρόσεστιν· ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ ἀχώριστον τῷ πυρὶ τὸ θερμαίνειν, καὶ τῷ φωτὶ τὸ λάμπειν· οὕτω καὶ τῷ Πνεύματι τὸ ἁγιάζειν, τὸ ζωοποιεῖν, ἡ ἀγαθότης, ἡ εὐθύτης.*

In *Contra Eunomium* 3.5, Basil makes what will become known as his characteristic move: he links the question of the Spirit's status with his role in baptism. The formula passed on by the Saviour is of baptism in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. According to Basil, if one assumes that the Father and Son are divine, but that the Spirit is not, then in confessing this formula, one is confessing a Trinity that becomes such by addition from without. In *Contra Eunomium* 3.5, Basil says it would be "as if the deity becomes complete (συμπληρουμένης) in a Trinity".[66] God is not 'made up' of the Trinitarian persons, since such a view obviously implies composition. Thus, Basil shows himself to be concerned with the problem of complements in talking about the Trinitarian persons. He thinks this is avoided by drawing an absolute line between creatures and God, and placing the Spirit on the latter side of the line. He does not seem to see the same problem in connection with the divine attributes.

It is a testament to the astuteness of Eunomius that in his response to Basil's *Contra Eunomium*, he accused Basil of holding the divine attributes to be essential complements.[67] Why should we not agree with him? Eunomius' charge certainly has force, but it is important to be precise. Eunomius' allegation that Basil thinks God "participates" in God's essential properties is certainly off the mark. But even more fundamentally, Eunomius attributes a view to Basil that he cannot have held without being seriously inconsistent. Given his absolute agnosticism about the 'what it is' of God, that is, the essence, it would be odd to find Basil actually providing definitional parts for God—and essential complements are in the strictest sense definitional parts. And yet Basil does predicate light, goodness, and life of the divine *ousia*.

What is required to save Basil from inconsistency is a clear distinction between substance and essence. One can speak of features as necessary to God, and thus as characterizing God's substance, without claiming that these features define God. This distinction may be

[66] *Eun.* 3.5.36–7 (SC 305: 164).

[67] Eunomius, *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.499 (GNO 1: 371.30–372.5): φησὶ [sc. ὁ Εὐνόμιος] μηκέτ᾽ αὐτὸν παρ᾽ ἡμῶν ἁπλοῦν εἶναι κατασκευάζεσθαι ὡς μεταλαμβάνοντα τῶν νοημάτων τῶν δι᾽ ἑκάστης προσηγορίας σημαινομένων καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐκείνων μετουσίας συμπληροῦντα ἑαυτῷ τὴν κατὰ τὸ εἶναι τελείωσιν.

implicit in Basil, but I suggest that we only see it clearly and explicitly in Gregory of Nyssa. We will discuss this in the next chapter, locating Gregory in close connection with Porphyry's understanding of propria. With this understanding of the terms predicated of the divine *ousia*, Gregory is able to claim genuine, but incomplete knowledge of God *in se*. That is, he is able to satisfy a basic condition of knowledge—that one knows something about the object itself and not merely about one's perspective of it (as terms developed through the process of *epinoia* tell us). He can do so without claiming to know the *definition* of God.

Basil may not have seen the importance of distinguishing substance and essence with precision. Yet, together with his understanding of the peculiar distinguishing marks of the Trinitarian persons, Basil's account of the unity of God, however confused and tentative, paved the way forward for a fully pro-Nicene theology. This point is obscured when scholars speak as if the principal act of affirming pro-Nicene orthodoxy is confessing the *homoousion*. Basil is notoriously slippery on this. But what he develops, and bequeaths to subsequent pro-Nicene authors, is a way of classifying those terms which express the divine unity and those which express features distinctive of the persons. This has enormous implications for how one reads scripture. In closing this chapter, we will look at one instance of how Basil's classificatory imagination and his understanding of divine simplicity shape his exegesis, allowing him to reclaim a difficult passage like John 14:28 ("The Father is greater than I") from Eunomius.

SIMPLICITY AND READING SCRIPTURE DOCTRINALLY

For Eunomius, divine simplicity entails that, if sense is to be made of the term "greater" in John 14:28, it must mean that the Father is greater in substance.

Moreover it is not possible for anything to exist within the substance of God such as form or mass or size, on account of the fact that God is completely free from composition. But if it neither is nor ever could be lawful to

conceive of any of these things or others like them as being linked with the substance of God, what sort of account will still consent to likening the begotten to the unbegotten? For neither likeness nor comparison nor fellowship in substance allows for any pre-eminence or difference, but rather they clearly bring about equality, and along with the equality they show that one likened or compared is unbegotten. But no one is so stupid or so defiant of piety as to say that the Son is equal to the Father! For the Lord himself explicitly declared: *the Father who sent me is greater than I* [John 14.28].[68]

Basil of course agrees that God is simple and that this rules out any corporeal measurements of greater or lesser. But he does not think that any sense can be made of the idea that a substance can be called greater than another *qua* substance: the idea is based ultimately on a statement to this effect in Aristotle's *Categories*.[69] And yet, Basil can neither abandon nor glibly dismiss John 14:28. So, in what sense is the Father greater? Basil says that something can be greater than another in the following senses: as cause, through an excess of power, by being of greater dignity, or greater size. Obviously, the last option is excluded by divine simplicity, which Eunomius and Basil assume applies in this sense to the Son as well as to the Father: both are immaterial and hence without size. Basil does not think that the Son can be of lesser dignity, since he is said to sit at the right hand of God, and the throne of God is a "title of dignity".[70]

Basil argues that Father and Son cannot be unequal in power. He has two ways of making the point, both of which reclaim important passages from the Gospel of John from Eunomius, giving them what Basil believes to be an orthodox interpretation. The first argument about power links 1 Corinthians 1.24 ("Christ, the power and wisdom of God") with John 5:19 ("The Son can do nothing of his own accord except what he sees the Father doing"). As Michel Barnes has shown, this passage from John's Gospel was very important in the controversy, lending itself readily to non-Nicene readings which stressed the inferiority of the Son. Moreover, Barnes has given instances proving that the move Basil makes of linking it with 1

[68] Eunomius, *Apol.* 11.1–12 (Vaggione 46); quoted in this form, with some slight emendations intended for clarification, by Basil at *Eun.* 1.22.1–13.

[69] *Eun.* 1.25.34–5; Aristotle, *Cat.* 5 (2b22ff.).

[70] *Eun.* 1.25.24.

Corinthians 1.24 was becoming important in responding to the non-Nicene exegesis of the Gospel verse.[71] On this reading, if the Son does what he sees the Father doing, it is not because he is subordinate, but because the Son is the very power of God. The fact that the Son does the same works as the Father implies that the Father and Son are identical in power.[72] The second argument about power involves an interpretation of John 10:28-30. Basil reads the words of Christ in John 10:30 ("I and the Father are one") as referring, in context, to equality of power.[73] The principal disputed verse in this section, John 14:28, calls the Father greater, but does not specify the sense of the superiority. But no other verse, when read properly, gives any support to the idea that this is a superiority of power. So we should not read that kind of superiority into John 14:28 either.

So then, it is only as cause and principle of the Son that the Father can be called "greater" than the Son. It was axiomatic that causes are greater than their effects, though typically in philosophical accounts (such as in Aristotle or Plotinus) this was construed in terms of the cause pre-eminently possessing a property which it transmits in diminished extent to another, a notion Basil would surely reject.[74] Also, Basil must believe that the superiority of causes obtains even if in the case of Father and Son there is no priority of time. Basil believes it to be the teaching of scripture that the Father begets the Son in an entirely immaterial, passionless, and timeless manner.[75] He believes that the biblical language about the begetting of the Son can be unambiguously affirmed, if understood in a purified way. This stretches our causal imagination, but it is still causality. Hence, the order among the persons is maintained, as is the wording of John's Gospel.

For Basil, doctrinally appropriate exegesis of a difficult verse like John 14:28 requires one to ask: in what sense are the words (here,

[71] Barnes, *Power of God*, 163–4.

[72] *Eun.* 1.23.19–23.

[73] *Eun.* 1.25.12–22. The argument seems to be based on the use of δύναται in John 10:29.

[74] See A. C. Lloyd, 'The Principle that the Cause is greater than its Effect', *Phronesis* 21 (1976): 146–56.

[75] See Mark DelCogliano, 'Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names' (Ph.D. Diss., Emory University, 2009), ch. 6, esp. 249ff.

especially the word "greater") being said? Eunomius assumed that appealing to divine simplicity immediately solved the matter, since it narrowed the options to one: being simple, the Father must be greater in substance.[76] For Basil, things are not so easy. To be sure, simplicity rules out some options: "greater" cannot be taken as any kind of corporeal measurement. But it does not preclude taking "greater" as referring to power, dignity, or causality: it does not rule out, one might rephrase, a God who acts, is worthy of worship, and who gives himself mysteriously and eternally to the Son. Only additional reflection beyond the appeal to simplicity will specify that John 14:28 should be interpreted with the last aspect in view. Time and again, Basil shows himself committed to preserving the complexity of the basic scriptural and liturgical language of Christian faith, even in his theological classifications of it. Divine simplicity does not negate this diversity. Nor, certainly, does it impose an alien 'philosophical' or 'Platonic' mentality onto biblical idiom.[77] It clearly rules out crude ways of accounting for biblical language, such as saying that the Father is greater because he is bigger. But more fundamentally, commitment to divine simplicity does not impose upon biblical idiom but rather forces deeper and closer attention to biblical language, as it compels the reader to discover more precise and more faithful ways of explicating—albeit through a glass darkly—the consistency and unity of the God of scripture without sacrificing the sense of the words. Basil offers ways of reading scripture as a record of God's perfect self-consistency, displayed without variation in the acts of the Father and the Son. And it is the Spirit, Basil comes

[76] Actually, there is some inconsistency in Eunomius' *Apology* on this point. Since 'Father' technically, according to Eunomius' account later in the treatise, refers to a divine activity which is external to the substance, Father can be greater than the Son in the way an activity is greater than its product. Basil reports this at *Eun.* 1.24.13–16 and argues against it. However, in the next section, Basil proceeds to argue against the idea that John 14:28 is to be taken as referring to superiority in substance. It should be noted that the passage under discussion, the one cited in the text from Eunomius, *Apol.* 11, contains no trace of the idea that the title 'Father' in John 14:28 refers to an activity, as opposed to the unbegotten substance. That idea does not appear until *Apol.* 24.21–2 (Vaggione, p. 66). Basil is reading Eunomius' text synoptically by arguing against both possibilities in *Eun.*1.24–5.

[77] For critique of some of the peculiar assumptions lying behind that old chestnut, see Ayres, *Nicaea*, 388–90.

increasingly to realize, who enables this confession. The development of Basil's thought on the Trinity lies outside of the scope of this study and has been described well by others.[78] These scholars have shown that Basil never rested with a single set of terminology, but continued to rethink Trinitarian language throughout his career. All of this should not, however, be seen principally as a search for technical terminology such as the Nicene *homoousion*. It is more basically a series of approaches to scrutinizing scriptural and liturgical language in ways guided by fundamental commitments such as divine simplicity.

Still, if in his anti-Eunomian writings Basil did succeed in reading scripture as narrating the unity of power, goodness, light, and life between the Father and the Son, it is less than clear whether his entire story of the divine unity hangs together, for the reasons that Eunomius himself published around the time of Basil's death in his *Apologia Apologiae*. In particular the accusation is still lingering that the terms Basil uses to describe the unity of God (the divine goodness, power, life, light, and so forth) sound dangerously similar to essential complements. If Eunomius is right, Basil has destroyed the notion of simplicity he is so committed to saving. In the next chapter, we will see that Gregory of Nyssa dwelt a great deal on the problem of how best to conceive the interrelation among the divine goods. Gregory is committed as strongly as Basil (or Eunomius) to reading scripture as portraying a God who acts with perfect consistency. And yet, he further develops and transforms divine simplicity. His philosophically profound reflections on scripture's portrayal of God's goodness, especially in the incarnation, lead him to revise certain assumptions about what counts as 'inconsistent' with God.

Gregory certainly draws more far-reaching conclusions about the divine goodness. But in many ways his work is a clarification and defence of his brother Basil's. Gregory specifies the interrelation of the divine goods and the implications of this theology for understanding the incarnation. But it was Basil who perceived that goodness is at the core of what Christians mean by 'God', that goodness is the grammar of divinity. As noted in the previous chapter, Basil

[78] See Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*.

argued that humans are set up in such a way that to desire God is an innate disposition. Knowing 'that God is', then, is actualizing this fundamental orientation of human identity. Basil makes this point in both his ascetic works and his anti-Eunomian letters, where he also reorients theological epistemology away from the Eunomian belief in the epistemological priority of definition. Basil roots theological epistemology in human love and orientation to the good. By so doing, he takes off the table the picture of theology as coolly repaying an epistemological debt.

7

"Therefore Be Perfect, as your Heavenly Father is Perfect": Gregory of Nyssa on Simplicity and Goodness

A common assessment holds Gregory of Nyssa[1] to be the speculative thinker whose brilliance outshines that of his more practically minded older brother Basil.[2] Without engaging this line of interpretation in detail, I wish to cut off one its main corollaries, which is to assume that there is discontinuity between Basil and Gregory on central issues such as the knowledge of God. The tendency to separate Gregory from Basil is most clear in those who claim that Gregory denies that humans can have any knowledge of God, or at least of God *in se* as distinct from God's revelatory activity.[3] These scholars take Gregory's statements about the incomprehensibility of the divine essence to rule out all knowledge of God as God is. In this chapter, I hope to show that this is a confusion. If all knowledge were comprehension, the conclusion would follow; but all knowledge is not comprehension.[4] Like Basil,

[1] A useful and clear survey of the biographical evidence for Gregory can now be found in Anna M. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1–57.

[2] Recently, e.g., Richard Cross, 'Gregory of Nyssa on Universals', *VC* 56 (2002): 372–410 at 397: "I find it hard to credit Basil…with the philosophical sophistication required for the development of such ideas" as are found in the so-called *Letter* 38; grounds, Cross takes it, for the attribution to Gregory.

[3] e.g. Verna E. F. Harrison, *Grace and Human Freedom According to St. Gregory of Nyssa* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), ch. 1, esp. 28–9.

[4] Proponents of the position that, according to Gregory, we can know nothing tend to rest their case on an elision between defining and describing, between full comprehension and knowing at all. See, for instance, Robert S. Brightman, 'Apophatic Theology and Divine Infinity in St. Gregory of Nyssa', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18 (1973): 97–114 at 109: "… even the term 'infinite' cannot be used as a

Gregory believes we can know God via conceptualization. But, also like Basil, he believes we can predicate some terms of the divine substance or nature itself, though he insists that these do not define God's essence. The majority of this chapter (the second section) will be devoted to his account of these terms, through which we know God as God really is without attaining comprehension of the divine essence. In the concluding section of the chapter, I will return to the common scholarly claim that Gregory denies all knowledge of God to humans.

In the first section, I examine some themes in the first and second books of Gregory's own *Contra Eunomium* in order to show how the anti-Eunomian theological epistemology there should be read as fundamentally a defence of Basil's own. Here, I will dwell on Gregory's appropriation of what I have called the 'negative' doctrine of simplicity in Basil (that is, his view of what simplicity does *not* imply), which includes most strikingly his doctrine of *epinoiai*. This claim of non-innovation on Gregory's part will be matched with the remainder of the chapter, in which I suggest that Gregory does have an original account of a theme intimated in Basil. This is the theme of the divine 'goods', the terms that we have seen Basil predicating as the 'formula of essence' of the Father and the Son. The majority of the present chapter will examine the moves that Gregory makes in articulating the logic of these terms: how humans can come to know them, how they relate to one another and to the divine nature, and especially how God's nature can be described by multiple terms if God is simple. My account of these terms will be synthetic, drawing on works from across Gregory's corpus. I suggest that a common logic informs Gregory's works on disputed theological matters and on 'spirituality'.

description of the divine being in any absolute sense, since thus to define God is to limit him". Note the vagueness of the phrase "description of the divine being in any absolute sense" and the way Brightman elides whatever this phrase means and whatever it means "to define God" and "to limit him". While Brightman *may* be correct about 'infinite' (since it is a negation), he is not right in thinking that every description of God constitutes a definition of God, much less a limitation of God. It is not clear what remains of his case for a total apophaticism in Gregory once we note the vagueness of his terms and his confusion of distinct claims.

GREGORY'S DEFENCE OF BASIL

Gregory offers a definition of *epinoia* that captures the logic of the term in Basil's theology: "As I see it, conceptualization is the way we find out things we do not know, using what is connected and consequent upon our first idea of a subject to discover what lies beyond."[5] This definition stresses the distinction between a "first idea" (*τῇ πρώτῃ νοήσει*) of something and *epinoia*, which is "the way we find out" (*ἔφοδος εὑρεκτική*) more. As he proceeds to clarify: "Having formed an idea about a matter in hand, we attach the next thing to our initial apprehension by adding new ideas, until we bring our research into the subject to its proposed conclusion."[6]

Two observations are pertinent here. First, nothing Gregory says disproves conceptualism as an interpretation of *epinoiai*: nothing he says leads us to believe that the concepts discovered by means of *epinoiai* have external 'referents'. This point helps to block a hyper-realist interpretation of Gregory (and Basil), which says that they view *epinoiai* as constituent, inherent aspects of objects.[7] The second observation allows us to fend off an entirely non-realist or nominalist interpretation, according to which all theological claims are only conceptualizations.[8] Gregory clearly states that one must begin with

[5] *Eun.* 2.182 (GNO 1: 277.20–3; trans. Stuart George Hall in Lenka Karfíková, Scot Douglass, and Johannes Zachhuber (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II*, An English Version with Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 10th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 97, slightly altered).

[6] Ibid. (GNO 1: 277.23–6; trans. Hall, 97).

[7] On *epinoia* in Gregory's second book *Against Eunomius*, one must now consult the many valuable contributions to Lenka Karfíková, Scot Douglass, and Johannes Zachhuber (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II*. Especially relevant are Joseph O'Leary, 'Divine Simplicity and the Plurality of Attributes (*CE* II 359–386; 445–560)' on pp. 307–8 and Johannes Zachhuber, 'Christological Titles—Conceptually Applied? (*CE* II 294–358)', on pp. 257–78. Unfortunately, however, the assumption that *epinoia* should be taken in a realist manner underlies many of the essays, including those of O'Leary and Zachhuber. See my '*Epinoia* and Initial Concepts: Rethinking Gregory of Nyssa's Defense of Basil', *SP* (forthcoming).

[8] An interpretation of the role of *epinoia* that heads in this direction is Rowan Williams, '"Is it the Same God?": Reflections on Continuity and Identity in Religious Language', in John H. Whittaker (ed.), *The Possibilities of Sense: Essays in Honour of D. Z. Phillips* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 204–18 at 206–7.

an apprehension *before* one can engage in conceptualization. If the latter is the method for making additional discoveries based on an initial concept, then one of two claims must be true. Either every initial concept is itself the product of conceptualization, in which case there would never be an original concept to start the process of discovery, or some concepts are not devised through conceptualization. The dilemma itself makes the latter claim more plausible than the former; it is logically necessary that there be theological 'data', so to speak, that are not the product of conceptualization. Moreover, placing Gregory's text in context, he would be faithfully reproducing Basil's own account of conceptualization by drawing a distinction between conceptualization and the basic notions it presupposes. And there is further reason from other works to suspect that not all ideas about God are devised through this process. In *On the Making of Humanity* and *On the Soul and Resurrection*, Gregory talks about humans being given at their creation the set of qualities that he calls the 'goods'.[9] As we will see, these correspond to the divine attributes that Gregory calls by the same name and which he treats not as *epinoiai*, but as propria of the divine nature. In other words, from Gregory's anthropological works, we have reason to believe that he thinks some notions of God (which are at the same time participated virtues in the human soul) are 'innate'.

Proponents of the view that, for Gregory, all theology is based on conceptualization may have drawn inspiration from the marvellous encomium on this process of reasoning that directly precedes the definitions we have just examined.

So where did we get the higher studies from? Where do we get the sciences of geometry and arithmetic, the disciplines of logic and natural philosophy, researches in mechanics, marvellous clocks of copper and water, the very

[9] *Hom. opif.* 16 (PG 44: 184AB); *anim. et res.* (PG 46: 81B); cf. *or. catech.* 5. The *Oratio Catechetica* will be cited by the chapter divisions as found in Srawley's edition (James Herbert Srawley (ed.), *The Catechetical Oration of Gregory of Nyssa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956)) and Richardson's translation (Cyril C. Richardson, trans., 'An Address on Religious Instruction', in Edward R. Hardy (ed.), *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954)). However, in cases where I cite Greek, I will provide references both to Srawley and to the GNO version by Ekkehard Mühlenberg (Ekkehardus Mühlenberg (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni oratio catechetica*, GNO 3.4 (Leiden: Brill, 1996)).

> philosophy of being itself, metaphysical speculation, and in sum the whole scholarly consideration of the great and sublime pursuits of the mind? What about agriculture? What about navigation? What about any of the business we do in life? How did the sea become passable to man? How was the airborne forced to serve the earth-bound? How is the wild beast tamed? How is the fearsome domesticated? Why does the stronger not refuse? Was it not through conceptualization that all these discoveries were made for mankind?[10]

As Alcuin Weiswurm noted over fifty years ago, in Gregory's revaluation here of conceptualization from Eunomian derision to the indispensable tool of all human arts and sciences, "it is not unlikely that the heat of controversy carried him too far".[11] The problem is with putting, say, ontology on the same level with navigation. Gregory's claim that ontology is based on conceptualization seems to provide grist for the non-realist interpretation's mill. However, his point may not be that the intelligible objects which one studies in ontology are dependent on human minds, but rather more simply that there could be no human science of ontology without the ability to devise new concepts to help classify and describe the intelligibles. For instance, Gregory thinks that 'ingenerate' is a product of conceptualization in theology. Analogously, to speak of true Being (which, for Gregory, is God) as 'without beginning' is to speak of it through conceptualization: not defining what Being is, but noting a feature that follows from other beliefs we have about what true Being must be.

The example of navigation is instructive. To know how to sail the Mediterranean is to know a fact about the Mediterranean only in a peculiar sense. Of course, in order to navigate the Mediterranean, water must have certain properties and certain materials must be buoyant; but the navigability of the Mediterranean is not an intrinsic property of the sea itself or the ships that sail it. It is rather a relational property that obtains between these two. Similarly, with theological conceptualization, one names God from one's own perspective: looking backwards, we see God's life having no beginning. God's having no beginning is not an intrinsic fact about God, but has

10 *Eun.* 2.181–2 (GNO 1: 277.7–20; trans. Hall, 97, slightly altered).

11 Alcuin A. Weiswurm, *The Nature of Human Knowledge According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa* (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1952), 141–2.

to do with God's life as viewed from my perspective. The case is similar with a host of doxological names, such as God's 'greatness'.

In responding to Basil's account of conceptualization, Eunomius exposed what he took to be a potential denial of divine providence on Basil's part. Eunomius has what we might call an extremely strong doctrine of revelation, with God revealing words and naming things exactly as they are.[12] In reserving the ability to develop names for humans, Basil has, in Eunomius' opinion, restricted God's providence; Basil is a closet Epicurean or Aristotelian—the two schools that were regularly vilified for denying divine providence.[13] As a result, Gregory is concerned in his *Contra Eunomium* to ground the ability to engage in conceptualization in the Creator's original gift of reason to the human race.[14] Human creativity is always rooted in something humans have received. Yet, like any human capacity, the ability to conceptualize contains a potential for both good and ill; the science of opposites is the same.[15] Gregory asks why Eunomius has fixated upon the potential for misuse alone.

As we saw in Chapter 5, the theology of the Cappadocian brothers is complex: God's simple nature may be beyond distinctions, but theology abounds with distinctions. Gregory accepts Basil's distinctions, reasserting them against Eunomius. Of particular interest for the issue of contradiction is Gregory's endorsement of the distinction between positive and negative terms. Gregory reiterates this in his second book against Eunomius,[16] which leaves us with little interpretive grounds for importing into his thought the later notion that affirmations in theology are simply 'negations of negation'.

Gregory even draws an additional distinction among theological terms, which attempts to defuse with grammatical nicety a central

[12] Cf. Eunomius, *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.196ff. (Gregory's response follows for several pages). This aspect of Eunomius' philosophy has received considerable attention, especially in connection with the question of the extent to which Eunomius is drawing on the theory of names in Plato's *Cratylus*. See now DelCogliano, 'Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names'. Gregory accuses Eunomius of drawing his theory of names from the *Cratylus* at *Eun.* 2.404.

[13] Eunomius, *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 2.410–11 (GNO 1: 345–6).

[14] *Eun.* 2.185.

[15] *Eun.* 2.187.

[16] See, e.g., *Eun.* 2.529–30.

Eunomian concern. Recall that Eunomius' central concern is to render the debt of confessing that God is as he really is. One consideration behind Eunomius' view that the term 'Father' cannot render this debt as 'ingenerate' can is that the former signifies an activity (*ἐνέργεια*) directed towards the Son, together with the view that activities are external to essences, and hence cannot define those essences in themselves.[17] The issue comes to a head in Eunomius' *Apology for the Apology*, in which he attacks Basil's claim that the term 'Father' can signify *both* a relation to the Son *and* something semantically equivalent to 'ingenerate'. For Eunomius, Basil must choose one or the other. Gregory responds by suggesting that Eunomius has confused grammatical distinctions with ontological ones. In his first book *Contra Eunomium*, Gregory delineates three classes of terms.

> Who does not know that some names are absolute and non-relative, while others are named with reference to some relation? Of the latter, again, there are some which can go in either direction, depending on intention of the one using them: when they are said by themselves, they indicate a simple meaning, but when they are altered in various ways, they come to be classed among relative terms.[18]

Examples of absolute terms are 'incorruptible', 'eternal', and 'immortal'. God is not called 'incorruptible' *of* anything; similarly, we may presume, with 'ingenerate'. Relative terms, for instance 'helper', require a related object: God is called the 'helper' of humans. The third class includes terms like 'God' and 'good'.[19] God is the good; but God is also *our* good. 'Father' also falls into this class, argues Gregory in defence of Basil. On the one hand, it is meant to introduce the notion of the Son; on the other, the Spirit cries "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15), using the term absolutely. This classification is immediately a defence of what Basil says about this term. But it has broader implications: Gregory suggests that Eunomius has confused grammatical absoluteness

[17] Eunomius, *Apol.* 24.21–2.
[18] *Eun.* 1.568–9 (GNO 1: 190.19–25): *τίς γὰρ οὐκ οἶδεν, ὅτι τῶν ὀνομάτων τὰ μὲν ἀπόλυτά τε καὶ ἄσχετα, τὰ δὲ πρός τινα σχέσιν ὠνομασμένα ἐστίν αὐτῶν δὲ τούτων πάλιν ἔστιν ἃ κατὰ τὴν τῶν χρωμένων βούλησιν ἐπιρρεπῶς πρὸς ἑκάτερον ἔχει, ἃ ἐφ' ἑαυτῶν μὲν λεγόμενα τὴν ἁπλῆν ἐνδείκνυται δύναμιν, μετατιθέμενα δὲ πολλάκις τῶν πρός τι γίνεται.*
[19] *Eun.* 1.570–1.

with ontological absoluteness. He has missed the point that nothing about being grammatically absolute makes a term more basic than a term that has a relative sense. Witness the example of goodness: surely the observation that God is good to his creation does not make God's goodness any less intrinsically true about God.

Gregory claims that this threefold classification is the sort of thing one learns from a grammarian, so we should not expect him to have made it up.[20] Yet, the theological application of it is ingenious. It reveals a subtle blend of originality with the fundamental goal of furthering Basil's project, which had as one of its chief components the distinction between ontological and linguistic claims. Like Basil, Gregory accords a strong role to human reason in the development—as well as the classification—of theological language.

THE 'GOODS'

Theological epistemology is fundamentally concerned with how to understand the terms one applies to God—the logic and grammar of the claims one makes, the metaphysical assumptions implicit in these claims. So, in order to understand a thinker's theological epistemology, one must first know the terms that are most relevant for him or her. With Eunomius, this term was 'ingenerate'. Gregory accepts Basil's repositioning of that term from an account of the divine essence to a predicate developed by reflecting upon the divine life. But, like Basil, he holds that there are terms that *in some way* name the divine substance. He calls these terms the 'goods', though he also refers to at least some of them as 'virtues'. Typically, the list of these includes some combination of light (*φῶς*), wisdom (*σοφία*),[21] power (*δύναμις*), life (*ζωή*), truth (*ἀλήθεια*), justice (*δικαιοσύνη*), goodness (*ἀγαθότης*), and incorruptibility (*ἀφθαρσία*).[22] These terms stand at

[20] *Eun.* 2.568.

[21] I list the feminine abstract forms, such as *σοφία*, here, but Gregory often uses the neuter form instead (e.g. *τὸ σοφόν* for 'wisdom', *τὸ ἀγαθόν* for 'goodness').

[22] Representative lists can be found at *Apoll.* (GNO 3.1: 136.26–137.10); *prof. Chr.* (GNO 8.1: 134.16–21); *in Eccl.* 8 (GNO 5: 426.3); *Eun.* 1.233; 1.516; 2.236; 2.503; 3.6.10; 3.6.49; 3.7.58; *or. catech.* 20 (79 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 53); *beat.* 4 (PG 44: 1241D,

the centre of Gregory of Nyssa's positive doctrine of God, appearing frequently across his corpus. I suggest that Gregory's chief contribution to the project Basil started lies in his oft-repeated argument that belief in divine perfection entails belief that God possesses all of these attributes by nature. While Basil merely told us that these terms could be predicated of the divine nature (as propria), he did not tell us much about their interrelation. Gregory fills this lacuna, and his use of the doctrine of simplicity is crucial to how he explicates the point. In order to understand the function of the language of simplicity in his corpus, we must begin by discussing the divine goods.

One of the goods, power, has been studied by Michel Barnes. Barnes has shown the centrality of a technical understanding of power to Gregory's theology.[23] According to Barnes, when Gregory speaks of the divine power, he is referring to a causal capacity rooted in the divine nature, which reflects or expresses that nature in the way that the power of heat reflects the nature of fire. This power is inseparable from the nature and gives rise to the divine activities (*energeiai*) in the world. This doctrine has powerful anti-Eunomian polemical implications, for, on the one hand, Gregory argues that the Father and the Son share a common power (and hence a common nature), and, on the other hand, Gregory is able to cite 1 Cor. 1.24, which states that the Son *is* the "power of God".[24] If either or both of these points (the sharing of a common power and the Son as the divine power) is correct *and* Gregory's understanding of the relation between nature and power is correct, then Eunomius is surely mistaken in dissociating the natures of the Father and the Son.

1248A); *beat.* 5 (1253B); *beat.* 6 (1268D–1269A); *beat.* 8 (1300B); *anim. et res.* (PG 46: 160C); *hom. opif.* 16 (PG 44: 184AB). The final passage is sometimes taken (as in NPNF 5: 405) to state that freedom from necessity (τὸ ἐλεύθερον ἀνάγκης εἶναι) is pre-eminent among the goods. It does not say this; it only says that it is one of them.

[23] Barnes, *Power of God*; 'Eunomius of Cyzicus and Gregory of Nyssa: Two Traditions of Transcendent Causality', *VC* 52 (1998): 59–87; 'One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic', *SP* 29 (1997): 205–23; 'Divine Unity and the Divided Self: Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology in its Psychological Context', *Modern Theology* 18 (2002): 475–96; cf. 'The Background and Use of Eunomius' Causal Language', in idem and Daniel Williams (eds.), *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 217–36.

[24] On the ambiguity between these two in Gregory, see *Power of God*, 291–6.

Barnes's analysis of this argument is flawless. However, he has not offered a sufficient account of an aspect of Gregory's use of 'power' language, namely, the fact that 'power' is frequently listed and analysed by Gregory in connection with the other goods. In what follows, I draw heavily on Barnes's work. Indeed, I suggest that much of what he says about the relation between the divine nature and power applies equally well to the relation between the divine nature and each of the goods. I maintain that this similarity is by no means accidental: the divine power occupies the same kind of logical and metaphysical status as the other goods.[25] As we will see, this status is that of propria, unique identifying properties that are inseparably linked to the divine nature, but distinct in some sense from it.

For now, we need to examine the list of goods. Why does Gregory seize upon just these terms? Gregory never provides an argument to establish the precise membership of the class of goods. Moreover, when he lists goods, he typically leaves the list indefinite, closing with a phrase like "and any other concept that is fitting to God".[26] One does not get the impression that he is working with an absolutely fixed set, even though the core terms, listed above, are relatively constant across his corpus. Most likely, he believes he is justified in assuming that there will be agreement on the applicability of these terms to God.[27] Recall that even Eunomius uses 'power', 'life', 'light', 'goodness', and 'incorruptibility' of God (though, as we have seen, he believes they are all synonyms). The dispute between Gregory and Eunomius is not over *whether* these terms are appropriate, but over the *logic* of their application and the metaphysics implied by this logic (especially the relation between the divine nature or essence and

[25] Barnes notes that Gregory opposes the identity thesis. See '*ΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ* and the Anti-Monistic Ontology of Nyssen's *Contra Eunomium*', in Robert C. Gregg (ed.), *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments* (Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1985; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock), 327–34; *Power of God*, 290.

[26] *Or. catech.*, pref. (4.13–14 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 7); cf. *Eun.* 1.167 and many of the passages cited in note 22.

[27] Note how a rejection of the kind of theology we have seen in Ptolemy is part of what fourth-century disputants like Eunomius and Gregory share. Gregory's list would not be uncontroversial among Platonists, some of whom were opposed to attributing virtues like justice to (the highest) God: see Alcinous, *Didask.* 28.3. They were following Aristotle, *EN* 10.8, in this.

its properties).[28] Gregory clearly never perceived a need to defend his list. Each of the goods is more or less biblical in origin. Gregory also believes that these are the notions one naturally has of divinity.

In light of our discussion in Chapter 5, there is a problem with this list. If these are supposed to be the positive properties that somehow name the divine substance (without, of course, *defining* it), then how can 'incorruptibility' be in this list, since it is grammatically and semantically negative, and since Gregory accepts Basil's disjunction between positive and negative terms? This is admittedly curious, but a clue may lie in the claim Gregory makes in *On Virginity* that the term "virginity" (*παρθενία*) is synonymous with "purity and incorruption" (*τὸ καθαρὸν καὶ ἄφθαρτον*) and that these are proper (*ἴδιον . . . καὶ ἐξαίρετον*) to the divine nature.[29] This suggests that there may be some positive state of purity that the term 'incorruption' names.

Gregory gives us much more information about the character of the goods than he does about why these terms in particular qualify as goods. Consequently, the following discussion will focus on the former issue. We can identify three central themes in Gregory's treatment of the goods: first, the limitation of goods by their opposites (and those alone); second, the distinction between true and false goods; third, the relation of the goods to divine nature or essence. Under the third broad theme, we will discuss two ways in which the goods, though distinct from the divine nature, are necessarily joined to it and to one another. The first is rooted in the status of the goods as propria of the divine nature; the second in the reciprocity of the goods, a notion modelled on the philosophical theory of the reciprocity of the virtues.

[28] Since Gregory and Eunomius share common authorities (explicitly, common notions and scripture), they need not *justify* the theological terms that they believe come directly from these authoritative sources.

[29] *Virg.* 2.1.10–11 (SC 119: 264); 2.2.5 (SC 119: 266). It is also possible that Gregory is thinking of Origen's argument that being "stainless" (*immaculatum*) belongs to God alone "by substance and by nature" *substantialiter et naturaliter*): *prin.* 1.5.5 (SC 252: 192). For "purity" in the divine nature, see the texts cited in Friedhelm Mann (ed.), *Lexicon Gregorianum: Wörterbuch zu den Schriften Gregors von Nyssa*, vol. 5: *καγχασμός—κωφόω* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 20, s.v. *καθαρότης*, 5c.

The Limitation of Goods by their Opposites

There are two basic features that apply to all of the goods: first, each has an opposite;[30] second, each is limited *only* by its opposite.[31] The second aspect distinguishes the goods from sensible objects:

In the case of all the things that are measured by sense-perception, perfection is marked off by certain definite boundaries, as in the case of quantity, both continuous and discrete. For every quantitative measure is circumscribed by certain limits proper to itself. The person who looks at a cubit or at the number ten knows that its perfection consists in the fact that it has both a beginning and an end. But in the case of virtue we have learned from the Apostle that its one limit of perfection is the fact that it has no limit . . . no Good has a limit in its own nature but is limited by the presence of its opposite, as life is limited by death and light by darkness. And every good thing generally ends with all those things which are perceived to be contrary to the good.[32]

The principle that a good is only limited by its opposite provides Gregory with a powerful argument concerning the fittingness of the incarnation. After arguing—in a fashion reminiscent of Athanasius' *On the Incarnation*—that it belongs to God alone to restore fallen humanity to its original dignity, Gregory responds to an objection regarding the *way* in which God is said by Christians to have accomplished this restoration.[33] Isn't it out of character, indeed outright

[30] *Beat.* 4 (PG 44: 1241D): *ἀντιδιέστηκε δὲ τῇ σωφροσύνῃ μὲν τὸ ἀκόλαστον· τῇ φρονήσει δὲ ἡ ἀφροσύνη, καὶ ἑκάστῳ τῶν πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον ὑπειλημμένων ἐστί τι πάντως τὸ ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου νοούμενον.*

[31] *Eun.* 1.168; *v. Mos.* 1.5–8; *anim. et res.* (PG 46: 97A); cf. *hom.* 5 *in Cant.* (GNO 6: 157.21–158.1).

[32] *V. Mos.* 1.5 (SC 1, 3rd edn.: 48; trans. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Life of Moses* (New York: Paulist, 1978), 30, first sentence altered): *Ἡ τελειότης ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων ὅσα τῇ αἰσθήσει μετρεῖται πέρασί τισιν ὡρισμένοις διαλαμβάνεται, οἷον ἐπὶ τοὺ ποσοῦ, τοῦ τε συνεχοῦς καὶ τοῦ διωρισμένου. Πᾶν γὰρ τὸ ἐν ποσότητι μέτρον ἰδίοις τισὶν ὅροις ἐμπεριέχεται· καὶ ὁ πρὸς τὸν πῆχυν ἢ τὴν τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ δεκάδα βλέπων οἶδε τὸ ἀπὸ τινος ἀρξάμενον καὶ εἴς τι καταλῆξαν, ἐν ᾧ ἐστι τὸ τέλειον ἔχειν. Ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἕνα παρὰ τοῦ Ἀποστόλου τελειότητος ὅρον ἐμάθομεν, τὸ μὴ ἔχειν αὐτὴν ὅρον . . . πᾶν ἀγαθὸν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ φύσει ὅρον οὐκ ἔχει, τῇ δὲ τοῦ ἐναντίου παραθέσει ὁρίζεται, ὡς ἡ ζωὴ τῷ θανάτῳ καὶ τὸ φῶς τῷ σκότῳ· καὶ πᾶν ὅλως ἀγαθὸν εἰς πάντα τὰ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἐκ τοῦ ἐναντίου νοούμενα λήγει·*

[33] The argument summarized in this paragraph is found at *or. catech.* 9 (53.6–17 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 37).

contradictory, for a transcendent, immaterial deity to enter into human life, to be born, to grow, eat, sleep, grieve, and die? The assumption here is that God has a nature which not even God can contradict. And Gregory grants this. He simply argues that nothing about being human contradicts the divine nature. This is because God is the good itself, and the only thing contrary to the good is evil. Moreover, the only thing that is "shameful" (αἰσχρόν) is "the passion of vice" (τὸ κατὰ κακίαν πάθος).[34] Gregory takes as a corollary of this that, where there is nothing "shameful", there is good.[35] So, Gregory throws the burden of proof back on the imagined objector:

> Let them demonstrate that the birth, the upbringing, the growth, the advance towards natural maturity, the experience of death, and the rising from death are vicious (κακία); alternatively, if they claim that the things we've mentioned are free of vice (κακία), they will necessarily agree that foreignness to vice is in no way shameful (αἰσχρόν).[36]

This passage shows the force of Gregory's claim that only the opposites of goods actually oppose those goods: the vicissitudes of human life are not evils, and consequently do not by themselves block our participation in God's life—or God's sharing in ours. With this argument, Gregory is able finally to escape Ptolemy's problem: the world is no longer viewed as the opposite of God, such that God cannot enter into it and act within it. God and world are not opposites. This is no small part of the Cappadocian transformation of divine simplicity.

Gregory's argument has undeniable theological power. But it is not without its difficulties. It appears to rest upon an equivocation between the opposite or contrary of a good and its contradictory. The problem—which also plagues classical discussions such as Plato's *Protagoras*[37]—lies in viewing the opposite of a good as the only contradictory of it: viewing dead things, for instance, as the only things that are not alive. What about stones and staplers, which we

34 Presumably the latter phrase is equivalent to what we might call moral evil.

35 This requires the premise, stated elsewhere, that there is no mean between good and evil, such that each and every existent must be characterized by one or the other: see *infant.* (GNO 3.2: 74.8–12; trans. NPNF 5: 374).

36 *Or. catech.* 9 (53.17–54.4 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 37–8).

37 See Taylor's notes: Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. with notes by C. C. W. Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 129.

would call neither dead nor alive, but would call not-living? As for the opposites good and evil, Gregory explicitly says that every existent must be characterized by one or the other:

That which is to be found neither in the category of good nor that of bad is no category at all; for this kind of antithesis between good and evil is an opposition that admits no middle; and neither will come to him who has not made a beginning with either of them. What therefore falls under neither of these heads may be said not even to have existed.[38]

Gregory implicitly rejects here the Stoic classification of value, according to which there is an intermediate term between good and evil, namely, the 'indifferent'.[39] It is not difficult to think of examples that on the face of it would refute his claim. Think of the colour red or the musical note middle C: are these good or evil? By themselves, they are neither. Yet, they exist in some sense. Gregory's statement of the principle that everything is either good or evil seems too universal. In this passage, he does not restrict it to activities of a certain kind, for instance, or to human souls: things that are of such a nature as to admit the opposition of good and evil. However, he does include this qualification elsewhere, saying that it only applies to choices directed towards an end (*προαίρεσις ὁρμητική*); beings that are lifeless and lack sense-perception are not inclined towards good or evil.[40]

True and False Goods

When confronted with Gregory's view that all things are either good or evil, we are inclined to cite as counterexamples items that appear

[38] *Infant.* (GNO 2.2: 74.8–12; trans. in NPNF 5: 374, slightly altered): *τὸ δὲ μήτε ἐν ἀγαθῷ μήτε ἐν κακῷ εὑρισκόμενον ἐν οὐδενὶ πάντως ἐστίν· ἄμεσος γὰρ ἡ τῆς τοιαύτης ἀντιθέσεως ἐναντιότης, ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τοῦ κακοῦ λέγω, ὧν οὐθέτερον ἔσται τῷ μὴ θατέρου κατάρξαντι. τὸ οὖν ἐν μηδενὶ ὂν οὐδ' ἂν εἶναί τις εἴποι ὅλως.* Cf. *mort.* (GNO 9: 34.9–14); *hom.* 8 *in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 426.5–6); *Eun.* 3.9.6 (GNO 2: 266.2–5), though in the last two passages the principle is applied to rational beings alone.

[39] See Simplicius' account of the indifferent in connection with Aristotle's discussion in the *Categories* of mediate contraries, *in Cat.* 386.24–6.

[40] *Eun.* 3.9.6 (GNO 2: 266.2–5): *πᾶσα δὲ προαίρεσις ὁρμητικὴ ἤτοι κατὰ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐνεργεῖται πάντως ἢ πρὸς τὸ ἀντικείμενον φέρεται. τὸ γὰρ πρὸς οὐθέτερον ἐπιρρεπῶς ἔχειν ἢ τῶν ἀψύχων ἴδιον ἢ τῶν ἀναισθήτων ἐστίν.*

inherently indifferent, like computers, musical notes, and useless parts of organic bodies. These are external criticisms we might raise against Gregory's theory; though, as we have seen, he qualifies the principle to account for this. Yet, internal to his theology is a doctrine equally hard, at first glance, to reconcile with it. For Gregory, sensible 'goods' are not really goods at all; yet, they are not *evils*, merely false goods.[41] How can this fit with the disjunction between good and evil? When Gregory speaks of 'false' goods from the sensible realm, he is thinking of things like wealth. Wealth appears to be a good, but only to some, and in those cases only some of the time, whereas true goods are those which "give a satisfaction which is not transient, and which do not seem good to one person and useless to others, but are good always, at all times, and in all people whom they affect".[42] These sound nice, but how do we know how to pick them out? As we will see, the problem of picking these out is the same as the problem of picking God out from transient goods; we will also see that doing this well requires a discipline of ascetic purification.

Gregory does not make the move of claiming that real goods immediately impress themselves upon us in such a way that guarantees our recognition of them as real goods. Rather, he acknowledges that one must make judgements about what is good, and that these judgements presuppose criteria. He typically recognizes two criteria or, rather, two *kinds* of criteria one can employ. He sometimes says that the first criterion is 'sense-perception' (*αἴσθησις*) in general or one or more of the senses in particular;[43] other times he labels it 'pleasure' (*ἡδονή*);[44] still other times, it is both.[45] It is presumably the same criterion which he labels "custom" (*συνήθεια*) in his second homily *On the Song of Songs*.[46] There is a unity amidst all these labels: all are ways of following appearances, rather than reality.[47] The

[41] See *hom.* 8 *in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 421.15–422.8).
[42] Ibid. (trans. 131–2 Hall).
[43] *Pss. titt.* (GNO 5: 28.18, 35.28); *hom.* 5 *in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 354.17, 418.10); *hom.* 15 *in Cant.* (GNO 6: 451.19); *virg.* 11.2.15, 11.5.13; *v. Gr. Thaum.* (PG 46: 937B).
[44] *Virg.* 4.4.34.
[45] *Hom.* 8 *in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 420.2–3).
[46] *Hom.* 2 *in Cant.* (GNO 6: 65.15–66.6).
[47] Ibid. (GNO 6: 66.9–10).

second criterion is the soul, reason, or the mind (ψυχή, λογισμός, νοῦς).[48] Gregory does not invent this opposition: the debate between hedonistic and rationalistic ethics goes back at least to Plato's *Philebus*. For Gregory, human nature has the power of free will in deciding between these as criteria of goodness. The choice one makes will determine the inclinations of one's thinking (διάνοια) and one's "loving disposition" (ἡ ἀγαπητικὴ διάθεσις): that is, one will desire and find joy in the kind of good corresponding to one's criterion.[49] Gregory does not set up the choice between the two criteria as a fair fight: one is obviously encouraged to side with reason over perception and pleasure. That is the rhetoric of Gregory's texts; but, let us say someone has not read one of these gems: how would she know to pick rational goods over sensual ones? Gregory argues that the choice will become clear to the extent one recognizes that the goods corresponding to the criterion of sense-perception or pleasure are inherently limited *by their opposites*.[50]

A clear example of this (though others could be discussed) is Gregory's criticism of marriage in his early treatise *On Virginity*.[51] Marriage

[48] *Mort.* (GNO 9: 47–8); *or. catech.* 21 (83.12–13 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 56); cf. *hom.* 3 *in Cant.* (GNO 6: 72.9); *hom.* 8 *in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 420.16).

[49] See, e.g., *hom.* 8 *in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 422ff.). For a thorough account of the way in which Gregory describes the διάνοια as inherently 'in flow', tending towards different directions based on the orientation of one's life, see Martin Laird, *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 34–62.

[50] In my account of the limitation of sensible goods in Gregory, I am indebted to a distinction Alexander Nehamas draws in his account of what it is that makes the sensible world imperfect in Plato's philosophy: 'Plato on the Imperfection of the Sensible World', in idem, *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 138–58. Nehamas argues, against a common interpretation, that sensible items do not fall short of their exemplar in the very respect in which they participate in that Form. For instance, to say that a tall man is imperfectly tall is not to say that he is not really tall. Rather, it is to say that his tallness only belongs to him accidentally and is relative (compared to some, he is tall and to others, he is not tall). This contrasts with the Form of tallness. This is precisely Gregory's understanding of the goodness of the sensible world: it is not that sensible goods are *not* goods, but that they are good in an imperfect, relative, and accidental way. The goodness (i.e. the desirability) of wealth, for instance, is not *per se* goodness; to a Franciscan, wealth is repugnant.

[51] I am referring to the lengthy third chapter of *On Virginity*. There has been extensive discussion of this criticism in recent sholarship, sparked by Mark Hart's claim that Gregory is being facetious in enumerating the perils of marriage (rather

is a good example of Gregory's theology of goodness, since it is clearly not evil, and yet is not a *per se* good. Marriage is, undeniably, widely considered to be a good—indeed Gregory himself had been married as a younger man.[52] Gregory's aim is to persuade people of the value of the celibate life. He does so, not by arguing that the married life is not at all good, but by claiming that even at its best, the goods that it conveys are mingled with their opposites. Take, for instance, the chief good of marriage (i.e. the chief thing sought after), which according to Gregory is "obtaining the joy of living together".[53] Gregory's point is not the comic's point that living together is actually unpleasant, but that even at its most pleasant, the married man with any foresight at all knows that his source of joy, living *together* with his bride, will one day come to an end. It is not that living together is not good, but that living together with another person always implicitly includes the prospect of not living together. In this sense, the good of marriage, even at its best, is mingled with, and hence limited by, its opposite. If you could have foresight at the outset of a marriage, "you would see, if indeed it is possible to look without risk, a great mixture of opposites, laughter made wet with tears, grief mingled together with joys, death always present along with what happens through one's expectations and clinging to each source of pleasure".[54]

like many a stand-up comic): 'Reconciliation of Body and Soul: Gregory of Nyssa's Deeper Theology of Marriage', *TS* 51 (1990): 450–78; idem, 'Gregory of Nyssa's Ironic Praise of the Celibate Life', *Heythrop Journal* 33 (1992): 1–19. Hart has been followed by John Behr, 'The Rational Animal: A Rereading of Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*', *JECS* 7 (1999): 219–47. Hart's clever proposal has not met basic evidential standards, however, and consequently I side with those who have responded negatively: Michel Barnes, '"The Burden of Marriage" and Other Notes on Gregory of Nyssa's *On Virginity*', *SP* 37 (2001): 12–19, esp. 17 n. 18, and Valerie A. Karras, 'A Revaluation of Marriage, Celibacy, and Irony in Gregory of Nyssa's *On Virginity*', *JECS* 13 (2005): 111–21. Some context is provided for Hart's interpretation within Gregory of Nyssa scholarship, as well as a balanced response, by J. Warren Smith, *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2004), 14ff.

[52] See Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, 15–18, 98–100.

[53] *Virg.* 3.2.8–9 (SC 119: 276): *Οὐκοῦν τὸ κεφάλαιον τῶν ἐν τῷ γάμῳ σπουδαζομένων τὸ κεχαρισμένης ἐπιτυχεῖν συμβιώσεως.*

[54] Ibid. 3.3.19–24 (SC 119: 280): *Εἶδες γὰρ ἄν, εἴπερ ἰδεῖν ἀκινδύνως ἐξῆν, πολλὴν τῶν ἐναντίων τὴν σύγχυσιν, γέλωτα δακρύοις ἐμπεφυρμένον καὶ λύπην εὐφροσύναις συμμεμιγμένην, πανταχοῦ τοῖς γινομένοις συμπαρόντα διὰ τῶν ἐλπίδων τὸν θάνατον καὶ ἑκάστου τῶν καθ' ἡδονὴν ἐφαπτόμενον.*

The case is similar with other apparent goods. For instance, drinking water is desirable. Yet, it is not always desirable to all. While healthy persons desire drink moderately, Gregory instances the person who has suffered a bite from the "thirst viper" and consequently cannot get enough.[55] This kind of example is familiar enough from the history of philosophy: whether proferred by a sceptic or anti-sceptic, such examples are meant to make us distrust our ordinary, commonsensical experience of the world, to drive a wedge between believing something to be true and being justified in believing it. The rabid snakebite victim is not justified in believing water to be desirable, at least in the quantities he desires. But the very fact that it is possible for water *not* to be desirable in some context shows that it is not a *per se* good, for the latter have as one of their characteristics being desirable in all possible circumstances.

We have now fleshed out the central distinction between merely apparent goods and true goods: the latter are never anything but good and hence desirable. But this flies in the face of the fact of the relativity of desire. And so we must ask a question not merely about the characteristics of the objects of desire, but also about the persons desiring: *to whom* are real goods desirable? Gregory's example of thirst includes a distinction between the (justified and moderate[56]) desire of a healthy person and the (unjustified and immoderate) desire of the snakebite victim. This is closely analogous to the distinction between followers of reason and pleasure. The former are healthy, the latter sick. This sounds in danger of becoming circular: the former choose rightly because they are healthy, and we know they are healthy because of their correct choice. But it is not actually circular, for the reason they are healthy is that they know the truth about themselves.[57] They know they are more than their sense-organs; they know their rationality as the controlling element in their

[55] *Hom.* 8 *in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 421). But see the rather different, indeed positive evaluation of an unquenchable thirst that arises from an unnatural condition in *ep.* 18.3 (GNO 8.2: 59).

[56] On moderation as part of what makes a good a good, see *hom.* 6 *in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 374). The doctrine of the mean appears elsewhere in Gregory's corpus: e.g. *v. Mos.* 2.288–9; *virg.* 7, 17; *beat.* 2.

[57] For the link between having the proper criterion of goodness and self-knowledge, see *hom.* 3 *in Cant.* (GNO 6: 72).

identity, and as something distinct from their bodies. They know that reason is the one thing "proper to humanity".[58] And these beliefs are defeasible and independent of the debate over the proper criterion. Should they prove false, the approbation we give to those who choose reason over pleasure would consequently be unjustified (or would have to find a different justification). The moral life—especially the choice of one's practical criterion—is therefore grounded in anthropology.

Gregory's anthropology is a large topic, which we need not discuss in detail here. It suffices for my purposes to draw attention to what Gregory has to say in his second homily *On the Song of Songs* about self-knowledge and its role in choosing the appropriate standard of goodness.

Our greatest protection is self-knowledge, and to avoid the delusion that we are seeing ourselves when we are in reality looking at something else. This is what happens to those who do not scrutinize themselves. What they see is strength, beauty, reputation, political power, abundant wealth, pomp, self-importance, bodily stature, a certain grace of form or the like, and they think that this is what they are. Such persons make very poor guardians of themselves: because of their absorption in what is foreign to them (*τὸ ἀλλότριον*), they overlook what is proper to them (*τὸ ἴδιον*) and leave it unguarded.[59]

Gregory proceeds to specify that what is proper to them is reason (*λόγος*). This is opposed to unthinking "custom" (*συνήθεια*). Earlier, we saw Basil's defence of this term in the sense of the common usage of terms. Here, we see Gregory arguing against *συνήθεια* in the sense of 'habit' or 'custom'. The point here, as in *On Virginity*, is that one comes to recognize one's true nature too late in life: by this point the customs of one's society and individual habits have led one to associate oneself with what is actually foreign to one's true nature.[60]

[58] *Hom.* 2 *in Cant.* (GNO 6: 66.4–5); for the argument, see *anim. et res.* (PG 46: 53AB).

[59] *Hom.* 2 *in Cant.* (GNO 6: 63.18–64.3; trans. Herbert Musurillo, SJ, in idem (ed.), *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 159–60, slightly altered).

[60] *Virg.* 9. Gregory does state there that habit can be a tool used for good once one redirects one's orientation to true goods. It is not inherently bad.

Indeed, no matter our cultural background, we are *all* too late, since our "appetite" as we now experience it is shaped in fundamental ways by the Fall.[61] The deck is stacked in favour of the irrational pursuit of pleasure, and this imbalance makes asceticism necessary for the discernment of true goods. One must train oneself in proper self-perception by adopting practices that withdraw one from the habits and desires, the narrative about the self, that have shaped him or her from youth. To borrow a phrase from Gavin Flood, one performs ascetic practices to "disrupt the socially conditioned *habitus*" and thereby "reverse the flow" of the body.[62] It is not surprising that ascetic performances include more or less severe renunciations of sex, food, and property, since these are the kinds of goods that one is sure to have been trained to pursue as sources of pleasure.

To summarize, thus far we have seen that one is able to distinguish true from false goods to the extent that one (A) recognizes the inevitable limitations of false goods by their opposites and (B) attains self-knowledge through ascetic training, which enables the choice of the proper criterion. While talk of criteria sounds highly intellectualist, it is important to reiterate that, for Gregory, to acknowledge something as good is to desire it, to direct one's innate disposition to love towards that object. These points constitute the 'subjective' side of Gregory's account of goodness. I have laboured over this aspect in order to tease out themes that will be important when we turn to the simplicity of the soul later in the chapter. But there is a broader issue at stake: there is a striking difference on this point between Gregory and Eunomius, whose extant texts offer us very little account of the subjective, human approach to God. Perhaps this is a trick of the evidence: we of course have works on spiritual progress by Gregory, whereas nothing of the sort survives from Eunomius. Still, by reorienting the notion of God to the notion of goodness, Basil and Gregory *necessarily* include a subjective element in their teaching about God, since goodness is that to which humans are naturally inclined.

[61] See Teresa M. Shaw, *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 195.

[62] *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 122.

Our discussion of true and false goods was initially motivated by Gregory's claim that every existent is either good or evil, which seemed incompatible with his claim that earthly things are at best false goods. We have seen that false goods are not evils. In fact, they are good, so far as they go, but the goods that earthly things convey are inevitably mixed with their opposites. Of course, the world is good because God created it.[63] And yet, the goodness of the world is not a simple 'fact' about it that obtains independent of humans. Rather, Gregory argues that the sensible world participates in goodness through the mediation of humanity. Humanity is created as a microcosm that combines sensible and intelligible natures. As David Balás has demonstrated, with reference to the *Catechetical Oration*, "the purpose of this mingling of the intelligible with the sensible is exactly this: that 'all things equally participate in the Good (*τοῦ καλοῦ μετέχοι*) and nothing be deprived (*ἀμοιροίη*) of a share in the higher nature (*τῆς τοῦ κρείττονος φύσεως*)'".[64] There is obvious anthropocentricism in this view. Still, we can glean from the passage that all things are good, and that they are so by participation. This helps us see what Gregory means by 'false' goods: not evils, but things that are non-essentially good. It also allows us to see that humanity plays a role in *making* them good.

We can now clarify what Gregory means when he claims that every existent is either good or evil. No existent thing is deprived of a share in the Good. Yet, none but God is the Good, that is, only God is good essentially. The imperfection of all else consists in the mixture of goods and limiting factors. And now we have set up the contrast that is most fundamental to Gregory's theology of goodness: not that between good and evil, but between essential goodness and participated goodness. This is what the contrast between true and false goods amounts to.

[63] *Hom.* 8 *in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 440).

[64] Balás, *ΜΕΤΟΥΣΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ*, 72. The quotation is from *or. catech.* 6 (30.7–9 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 22).

Goodness and the Divine Nature

Learning to discern true goods from false ones is identical to learning to distinguish God from all that is not God.[65] At the heart of ancient epistemology is the problem from Plato's *Meno* we have encountered already: how can one learn if one does not already know what one is learning, and how can it be learning if one already knows? The premise here is that some knowledge is a necessary condition for further enquiry; that recognition requires prior acquaintance. The argument is motivated by the fear that we might have no such prior knowledge, and so one responds by specifying just what kind of knowledge is necessary. To transpose the problem into a theological key: how will one recognize God if one does not already know him? Gregory does not directly address the Meno problem as we saw Clement doing. However, in so far as we can glean an answer from him, it is that humans 'already' know God in that we naturally attach ourselves lovingly to the good, and come to recognize God more and more appropriately to the extent that we recognize pure goodness, which is in no way relative, limited, or mixed. We don't *learn* to love the good. But we do 'learn God' by learning how to speak appropriately about goodness and by coming to desire the true good.

We can now ask: if goodness is, so to speak, what 'God' means, does it follow that God and goodness are the same thing? With this question, we are back to the topic of the identity thesis, which Basil did so much to combat. In this section, I will argue that Gregory follows his brother on this point: God and goodness or the goods are distinct in the sense that the divine nature or essence is distinct from each of the goods and from the whole set taken together. Yet, I must acknowledge at the outset that there is conflicting evidence on the topic. In the opening of the *Life of Moses*, Gregory says, "That which is good in the primary and proper sense, *whose nature is goodness*, is the Divinity itself, which, whatever one considers it to be in its nature, both is and is named this (i.e., good)."[66] This has given Balás grounds for claiming that "Goodness . . . is found in God (the Holy Trinity) by natural

[65] Cf. *hom.* 8 *in Eccl.* (GNO 5: 422.1ff.).

[66] *V. Mos.* 1.7, italics mine (SC 1, 3rd edn.: 50): *Τὸ πρώτως καὶ κυρίως ἀγαθόν, οὗ ἡ φύσις ἀγαθότης ἐστίν, αὐτὸ τὸ Θεῖον, ὅ τί ποτε τῇ φύσει νοεῖται, τοῦτο καὶ ἔστι καὶ ὀνομάζεται.*

identity."[67] He cites a number of texts in his section on the divine goodness. However, with the exception of the *Life of Moses* passage, Balás' texts merely prove that Gregory believes God is essentially good, not that goodness and the divine nature are identical, though Balás may believe the two claims imply one another.

The problem with this interpretation is that it fits poorly with what Gregory says elsewhere. Gregory frequently claims that God is good by nature, but only in the text from the *Life of Moses* does he claim that God's nature is goodness. And other texts contradict this, which suggests either that he is inconsistent or that the two claims do not imply one another for Gregory. Particularly clear is the sixth homily *On the Beatitudes.* Here, Gregory first argues that "The divine nature, taken on its own, whatever it is in its essence, transcends all comprehensive conceptualization."[68] One cannot even make reasonable inferential conjectures (*στοχαστικαῖς ὑπονοίαις*) about it.[69] Yet, one can reason *στοχαστικῶς* from the created order to the divine wisdom and goodness. From God's creative activity we can gain "a notion, not of the essence, but of the wisdom".[70] Additionally, by reflecting that the gift of creation is gratuitous, we can "come into awareness of the goodness, not of the essence".[71] So, we have two items here, wisdom and goodness, that are apparently distinct from one another and from the divine essence.[72]

[67] *ΜΕΤΟΥΣΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ*, 75. On page 124 we see clearly the conflation of two ideas (which I have labelled A and B) which are merely placed in apposition as though they were the same concept: "God is all these perfections (A) in virtue of His nature, (B) by essential identity." Without doubt, Gregory holds (A); but (A) does not imply (B), and the textual case for Gregory holding (B) is slim.

[68] *Beat.* 6 (GNO 7.2: 140.15–17): *ἡ θεία φύσις αὐτὴ καθ' ἑαυτὴν ὅ τι ποτὲ κατ' οὐσίαν ἐστὶ πάσης ὑπέρκειται καταληπτικῆς ἐπινοίας . . .*

[69] This is somewhat different from the picture painted by Gregory in his letter *To Eustathius on the Holy Trinity*, where he says we are guided "inferentially" (*στοχαστικῶς*) "in our investigation of the divine nature" through the divine works: see *Trin.* (GNO 3.1: 10–11).

[70] Ibid. (GNO 7.2: 141.9–10): *ἔννοιαν οὐ τῆς οὐσίας ἀλλὰ τῆς σοφίας . . .*

[71] Ibid. (GNO 7.2: 141.14–15): *τῆς ἀγαθότητος οὐ τῆς οὐσίας ἐν περινοίᾳ γενόμενοι.*

[72] Gregory proceeds to say that God is unknowable in nature (*τῇ φύσει*) but becomes visible in "activities" (*ταῖς ἐνεργείαις*) and is contemplated in the "propria

In his treatise *To Ablabius: On Not Three Gods*, Gregory summarizes this view as follows:

> For we say that the divine is incorruptible, perhaps, or powerful or anything else that it is customary to say. But we find that each of the names is peculiarly characterized by a meaning which is appropriately considered and spoken of in connection with the divine nature, but which does not however signify that which the nature essentially is. For whatever [the divine] is, it is incorruptible. Now, the notion of incorruptibility is this, that that which is is not dissolved into corruption. So then, when we say 'incorruptible', we say that the nature does not suffer. But *what* that is which does not suffer corruption, we do not express.[73]

Part of the argument here is an appeal to the non-synonymity of theological terms, a theme we have seen in Basil. But it is easy to miss the precision of Gregory's formulation. There are three important phrases here, each a locution for the same thing: the divine essence, which is the *unknown* item. These phrases are "what the nature essentially is" (*ὅ ἐστι κατ᾽ οὐσίαν ἡ φύσις*), "whatever [the divine] is" (*αὐτὸ γὰρ ὅ τι ποτέ ἐστιν*), and "*what* that is" (*τί δέ ἐστι*).

Phrases like this are quite common in Gregory's works. When they appear, they tend to serve the same purpose that they serve in the passage above: to identify in a precise manner what about God remains unknown.[74] Often they are accompanied, as above, with a

referred to him" (*τοῖς περὶ αὐτὸν ἰδιώμασι*). It is important to note that the latter clause does *not* mean, as Musurillo translates, "the things that are external to him". Musurillo, *From Glory to Glory*, 100. My rendering of *περὶ αὐτὸν* here follows Hilda Graef's in *St. Gregory of Nyssa: The Lord's Prayer; The Beatitudes*, 147.

[73] *Abl.* (GNO 3.1: 43.15–24): *λέγομεν γὰρ εἶναι τὸ θεῖον ἄφθαρτον, εἰ οὕτω τύχοι, ἢ δυνατὸν ἢ ὅσα ἄλλα σύνηθές ἐστι λέγειν. ἀλλ᾽ εὑρίσκομεν ἑκάστου τῶν ὀνομάτων ἰδιάζουσαν ἔμφασιν πρέπουσαν περὶ τῆς θείας φύσεως νοεῖσθαι καὶ λέγεσθαι, οὐ μὴν ἐκεῖνο σημαίνουσαν, ὅ ἐστι κατ᾽ οὐσίαν ἡ φύσις· αὐτὸ γὰρ ὅ τι ποτέ ἐστιν, ἄφθαρτόν ἐστιν· ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἀφθάρτου ἔννοια αὕτη, τὸ μὴ εἰς φθορὰν τὸ ὂν διαλύεσθαι. οὐκοῦν ἄφθαρτον εἰπόντες, ὃ μὴ πάσχει ἡ φύσις, εἴπομεν· τί δέ ἐστι τὸ τὴν φθορὰν μὴ πάσχον, οὐ παρεστήσαμεν.*

[74] Cf. the following occurences of *ὅ τι ποτέ ἐστιν* in connection with the divine nature or essence: *Maced.* (GNO 3.1: 92.23); *Pss. titt.* (GNO 5: 155.25); *Eun.* 2.12.11; 2.144.9; 2.149.2; 2.353.2; 2.475.2; 2.477.6; 2.535.4; 3.1.104.2; 3.4.62.6; 3.5.59.7; 3.7.55.6; 3.10.48.5; *hom.* 1 *in Cant.* (GNO 6: 37.13); *hom.* 3 *in Cant.* (GNO 6: 89.16); *v. Mos.* 1.7.3; *or. dom.* 2 (232.29 Oehler); *beat.* 1 (PG 44: 1197A); *beat.* 3 (PG 44: 1224C); *beat.* 6 (PG 44: 1268B); *anim. et res.* (PG 46: 57B). The phrase naturally has application in other contexts: it can also signal an unknown item in

list of terms that identify what is known about God. Often, though not always, these terms are the 'goods'. Clearly, these are distinct in some sense from the divine essence.

It is possible, however, that this is a merely epistemological distinction, such that knowing God's power may be different from knowing God's essence without the power and essence being really distinct. Nothing we have said so far rules this out (though nothing demands this interpretation either).[75] Even if Gregory is arguing that the power and the essence are merely distinct conceptually, this limited claim still scores anti-Eunomian points. Eunomius would not grant that any predicates of the divine substance or essence can be distinct in any way; asserting a conceptual, but not real distinction between them would constitute a response to Eunomius. Yet, two considerations lead us to believe that it would be a mistake to

exegesis, either of the Bible (e.g. *Ar. et Sab.* (GNO 3.1: 77.26); *Pss. titt.* (GNO 5: 89.29); *beat.* 1 (PG 44: 1196D)) or of Eunomius' words (e.g. *Eun.* 1.323), or in psychology (e.g. *anim. et res.* PG 46: 16B).

[75] On at least one occasion, Gregory clearly distinguishes the referent of divine names, which is identical for all divine names, and the meanings of the names, which are various: *Trin.* (GNO 3.1: 8.18): *πάντα γὰρ τὰ ὀνόματά τε καὶ νοήματα ὁμοτίμως ἔχει πρὸς ἄλληλα τῷ μηδὲν περὶ τὴν τοῦ ὑποκειμένου διαφωνεῖν σημασίαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπ' ἄλλο τι ὑποκείμενον χειραγωγεῖ τὴν διάνοιαν ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ προσηγορία, ἐφ' ἕτερον δὲ ἡ τοῦ σοφοῦ καὶ τοῦ δυνατοῦ καὶ τοῦ δικαίου· ἀλλ' ὅσαπερ ἂν εἴπης ὀνόματα, ἓν διὰ πάντων ἐστὶ τὸ σημαινόμενον, κἂν θεὸν εἴπης, τὸν αὐτὸν ἐνεδείξω, ὃν διὰ τῶν λοιπῶν ὀνομάτων ἐνόησας. εἰ δὴ πάντα τὰ ὀνόματα <τὰ> τῇ θεία φύσει ἐπιλεγόμενα ἰσοδυναμεῖ ἀλλήλοις κατὰ τὴν τοῦ ὑποκειμένου ἔνδειξιν, ἄλλα κατ' ἄλλην ἔμφασιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τὴν διάνοιαν ὁδηγοῦντα . . .* ("For all the names and concepts are of equal honour with one another since there is no difference in the subject they signify. For the designation 'good' does not lead one to think of one subject, while the designation 'wise', 'powerful', or 'just' leads to another. Rather, for all the sundry names you might say, there is one thing signified. Even if you say 'God', the same thing is indicated as you would consider through the rest of the names. Indeed, if all the names attributed to the divine nature have the same force as one another in the sense of the subject they indicate, but lead one to think of the same thing by meanings that differ . . . "). For a similar distinction, see *Catechetical Oration* 5 (GNO 3.4: 16.16–22). This distinction between reference and sense would allow Gregory to say God's goodness is identical in reality with God's essence, without this implying that the two concepts are identical. For comment, see Mariette Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et L'Herméneutique Biblique: Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1983), 38; and my '*Ad Eustathium de sancta trinitate*', in the Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa's *Opera dogmatica minora*, edited by Volker Henning Drecoll (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming in 2010).

interpret the distinction between the divine essence and the divine goods (and between one divine good and any other) as merely epistemological or conceptual. The first is that, like Basil, Gregory construes the knowable divine attributes as propria of the divine nature. The second is peculiar to Gregory: he believes the divine goods to be inter-entailing but not, to all appearances, identical. In addition to helping clarify the issue of the identity thesis, both of these points should help us to see in what sense Gregory may be called a (metaphysical) 'realist' when it comes to the divine goods, that is, an adherent of the view that these attributes exist in a way that is not dependent upon the human minds that know them. I will discuss the two points in turn.

The Goods as Propria of the Divine Nature

In Chapter 5, I discussed Basil's view that natures, as well as individuals, are characterized by peculiar characteristics or propria (ἰδιώματα, ἰδιότητες). We returned to this notion in Chapter 6, when we discussed the terms that Basil predicates as the λόγος τῆς οὐσίας of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: terms like 'light', 'life', and 'goodness'. Basil says these terms are "indicative of [God's] proprium" (δεικτικοὶ τῆς ἰδιότητος αὐτοῦ). Moreover, we saw that Basil views these as "concurrent" (σύνδρομος) with the divine nature: that is, as natural, necessary accompaniments of whatever it is to be God. For Basil, they are not accidents. In examining Basil's homilies *On the Hexaemeron*, we saw that Basil is in danger of thinking of the divine attributes as essential complements, suggesting that what he needs is a clear distinction between a term that names X's substance and one that forms part of its essential definition.

Such a distinction is present in Gregory of Nyssa's works, most clearly in the following passage from his work *To the Greeks from Common Notions*:

For this name [i.e. 'God'], which indicates the substance, does not tell us what it is (which is obvious since what the divine substance is is inconceivable and incomprehensible). Rather, since it is drawn from some proprium that belongs to the substance, this name intimates the substance,

just as when we say 'neighing' and 'laughing', which are propria of natures, we signify the natures of which they are propria.[76]

Gregory envisions two ways of pointing to a substance or nature: one tells us the essence (*τὸ τί*) of that substance, the other tells us the proprium (*ἰδίωμα*). The examples he gives of propria are the examples of propria in the strict sense in Porphyry's *Eisagôgê*. Porphyry's account of propria is worth quoting in full:

They divide property into four: what is an accident of a certain species alone, even if not of it all (as doctoring or doing geometry of man); what is an accident of all the species, even if not of it alone (as being biped of man); what holds of it alone and of all of it and at some time (as going grey in old age of man); and fourthly, where 'alone and all and always' coincide (as laughing (*τὸ γελαστικόν*) of man). For even if man does not always laugh, he is said to be laughing not in that he always laughs but in that he is of such a nature (*πεφυκέναι*) as to laugh—and this holds of him always, being connatural (*σύμφυτον*), like neighing (*τὸ χρεμετιστικόν*) of horses. And they say that these are properties in the strict sense, because they convert: if horse, neighing; and if neighing, horse.[77]

The fourth kind of property, which are propria strictly speaking, are neither accidental nor predicated in answer to 'What is it?' They are inherent in natures and necessarily so, without being definitional.[78] As such, they provide the perfect logical category for the divine attributes if one wishes to insist on both the unknowability of the divine essence and the (partial) knowledge of God as God is.[79]

[76] *Comm. not.* (GNO 3.1: 21.20–22.3): *δηλωτικὸν γὰρ τοῦτο τῆς οὐσίας οὐ τὸ τί αὐτῆς παριστῶν (δῆλον ὅτι ἐπείπερ ἀπερινόητον καὶ ἀκατάληπτον τὸ τῆς θείας οὐσίας), ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τινος ἰδιώματος προσόντος αὐτῇ λαμβανόμενον παραδηλοῖ αὐτήν, καθάπερ τὸ χρεμετιστικὸν καὶ τὸ γελαστικὸν ἰδιώματα ὄντα φύσεων λεγόμενα σημαίνει τὰς φύσεις, ὧνπέρ ἐστιν ἰδιώματα.*

[77] *Eis.* (12.13–21 Busse; trans. J. Barnes, *Porphyry: Introduction*, 11–12).

[78] See Alexander of Aphrodisias, *in topic.* [M. Wallies, *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis in Aristotelis topicorum libros octo commentaria* CAG 2.2 (Berlin: Reimer, 1891)], 295.33–296.2. See also J. Barnes's comments: *Porphyry: Introduction*, 309–11.

[79] There are many aspects of propria which I cannot go into here. For instance, there is some difficulty with keeping them distinct from what Porphyry calls *per se* differences. Gregory, like Alexander of Aphrodisias, cites being 'receptive of knowledge' (*to dektikon epistêmês einai*) as a proprium of humans, whereas Porphyry cites it as a *per se* difference. Both name properties that are necessarily inherent in substances by virtue of their nature. Compare Alexander, *in topic.* 43–5, 137, 382 Wallies (and

What terms count as propria in the case of God? The passage above teaches us that 'God' does. As Gregory explains, this is because "observing, beholding, and knowing all things" belongs to God alone.[80] And as he explains elsewhere, he believes that the term 'God' (*θεός*) etymologically derives from the verb for 'seeing' (*θεᾶσθαι*), which is semantically equivalent (in this case) to terms like 'observing' and 'knowing'.[81] In the *Catechetical Oration*, Gregory says that "just as each being has a certain proprium that makes the nature known, so too is truth proper to the divine nature".[82] Again, in *On Virginity*, Gregory speaks of "virginity" as "proper to and distinctive of the incorporeal nature", that is, God: this because virginity is synonymous with "purity and incorruptibility".[83] We have a range of terms, then, being called propria of God. Yet, the collection is not random: there is a sort of focal unity centred on the notions of goodness, perfection, and causality.[84]

One of the key features of propria is the fact that they necessarily inhere in the natures of which they are propria. Basil compares the relation of the Holy Spirit to the Spirit's properties to the relation between the elements and their powers. The elemental powers are prime examples of propria in Basil's homilies *On the Hexaemeron*, a point which Gregory reiterates.[85] Basil says that none of the Spirit's

Aristotle, *Topics* 134a14–16) with Porphyry, *Eis.* 9.12–13, 15.6 Busse; *in Cat.* 60.18, 117.13. This distinction is relevant for our purposes in that *per se* differences form part of essential definitions, whereas propria do not. In order to avoid essential definitions, Gregory needs to avoid *per se* differences. See Strange's note: Porphyry, *On Aristotle Categories*, 38 n. 40. There is a further problem of whether propria count as essential complements for Gregory, since he asserts that human propria are at *Maced.* (GNO 3.1: 101.30–102.2).

80 *Comm. not.* (GNO 3.1: 22.5–6): *τὸ πάντα ἐποπτεύειν καὶ θεωρεῖν καὶ γινώσκειν.*

81 *Abl.* (GNO 3.1: 44); *Eun.* 2.585; cf. *anim. et res.* (PG 46: 57B).

82 *Or. catech.* 34 (127.3–5 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 84): *ὥσπερ γὰρ ἑκάστου τῶν ὄντων ἔστι τις ἰδιότης ἡ τὴν φύσιν γνωρίζουσα, οὕτως ἴδιον τῆς θείας φύσεώς ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια.*

83 *Virg.* 2.1–2. The *τὸ ἀγαθόν* at 2.2.5 should perhaps be emended to *τοῦτο ἀγαθόν*: 'this good', i.e. 'virginity', rather than 'goodness'. I owe this suggestion to Steve Strange.

84 On God's creative power as a proprium, see Barnes, *Power of God*, 269.

85 See ibid., n. 9 and the texts cited there, especially *Eun.* 3.6.28. The example of elemental powers as propria helps us to clarify the sense in which divine goodness can be a proprium even though it is not the case that only God is good. The point is that

inherent properties have been "acquired" (*ἐπίκτητον*); rather, they are "inseparable" (*ἀχώριστον*) from him just as heating is inseparable from fire.[86]

Gregory of Nyssa uses this terminology to describe the relation between God's nature or essence and God's goodness. As Balás has shown, when Gregory says that God does not have goodness as something "acquired" (*ἐπίκτητον*), he is saying that God does not become good through participating in goodness.[87] Balás' additional claim that this means that there is "essential identity" between the divine essence and goodness goes too far.[88] In fact, in two of the passages where Gregory uses the terminology of non-acquisition, he distinguishes the divine essence from the divine goodness. We can see this by his use of the sort of locution for the divine essence that we noted above. First, in his treatise *Against the Macedonians on the Holy Spirit*, he writes of the Holy Spirit, "So, if the formula of his nature is simple, then he does not have goodness as something acquired, but, *whatever he himself is*, he is goodness, wisdom, power, sanctification, justice, eternity, incorruptibility, and all lofty and transcendent names."[89] The fact that the Spirit does not have goodness (and its accompanying terms) as something acquired is a direct inference from the Spirit's simplicity. But the italicized phrase (*αὐτὸ ὅ τί ποτέ ἐστιν*) is meant to distinguish the nature or essence itself from the goodness, and to reserve the former as unknown. At the same time, the argument is obviously intended not to sever goodness from the Spirit's nature, but to stress its inherence in that nature. Elsewhere, Gregory speaks of properties that are "not acquired" (*οὐχὶ*

only God is necessarily, essentially good, just as only fire is necessarily, essentially hot. But God can make other things good in so far as they participate in God, just as fire can make other things hot. The use of proprium-language for goodness does nonetheless represent some departure from Porphyry's understanding of propria in the strict sense: humanity cannot share its ability to laugh in the way God shares goodness. On the sense of goodness as a common term, see Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 3.10.49.

86 *Hom.* 326 (PG 31: 469).

87 Balás, *ΜΕΤΟΥΣΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ*, 124–30.

88 Ibid., 124.

89 *Maced.* (GNO 3.1: 92.21–5): *εἰ οὖν ἁπλοῦς ὁ τῆς φύσεως αὐτοῦ λόγος, οὐκ ἐπίκτητον ἔχει τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ ὅ τί ποτέ ἐστιν, ἀγαθότης ἐστί, σοφία, δύναμις, ἁγιασμός, δικαιοσύνη, ἀϊδιότης, ἀφθαρσία, πάντα τὰ ὑψηλὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ ὑπεραίροντα.*

ἐπίκτητος) as "co-essential" (*συνουσιωμένη*) and "connatural" (*σύμφυτος*), the latter being Porphyry's term from the relation of propria to natures.[90]

The second passage is one of the central texts in Gregory's corpus on divine simplicity: *Against Eunomius* 1.231–41.[91] In this text, and a parallel passage at 1.276, the distinction between essence and goodness is less obvious and one published translation obscures it entirely. Gregory does not use any of the locutions we have seen for the divine essence, but does use something similar. There are three sentences relevant to the current discussion of propria; I will return to the broader polemical implications of the passage in the section on the Trinity; here I discuss only the relevant portions. To translate these sentences is already to interpret them. And the interpretive differences are consequential: the passages have been taken as evidence of the identity thesis. Accordingly, for the two controversial passages (labelled B and C below), I provide the Greek and three translations: my own, that of Moore and Wilson in NPNF, and Stuart Hall's.

A. *Eun.* 1.234[92]

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐλλιπῶς κατὰ σοφίαν ἢ δύναμιν ἢ κατ' ἄλλο τι τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔχει ᾧ μὴ ἐπίκτητον ἐστι τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ καθό ἐστι τοιοῦτον πέφυκεν.

For nothing is deficient in wisdom, power, or any other good which has goodness, not as something acquired, but which is itself naturally such in virtue of what it is.

B. *Eun.* 1.235[93]

εἰ δὲ ἀληθῶς ἁπλῆν καὶ πάντη μίαν ἐνενόει τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτὸ ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἀγαθὸν οὖσαν, οὐ γινομένην ἐξ ἐπικτήσεως, οὐκ ἂν τὸ μεῖζον καὶ τὸ ἔλαττον περὶ αὐτὴν ἐλογίζετο.

90 *Apoll.* (GNO 3.1: 154.26–7).

91 The only scholarly paper devoted exclusively to divine simplicity in Gregory of Nyssa is a commentary on this passage: Anthony Meredith, SJ, 'The Divine Simplicity: *Contra Eunomium* 1.223–241', in Mateo-Seco and Bastero (eds.), *El 'Contra Eunomium I'*, 339–51.

92 GNO 1: 95.12–15. The translations of Moore and Wilson and of Hall substantially agree with my own.

93 GNO 1: 95.20–23.

Now, if he [i.e. Eunomius] truly conceived of the essence as 'simple and altogether one', being good in virtue of what it is and not coming to be so by acquisition, he would not have considered greater and lesser in connection with it.

Moore and Wilson: If he had been thinking of a Being really single and absolutely one, identical with goodness rather than possessing it, he would not be able to count a greater and a less in it at all.[94]

Hall: But if he truly envisaged the being as *simple and altogether one*, being itself what goodness actually is, and not becoming such by acquiring it, he would not think about it in terms of more and less.[95]

C. *Eun.* 1.276[96]

ἡ δὲ ἄκτιστος φύσις τῆς μὲν τοιαύτης διαφορᾶς πόρρωθεν ἄπεστιν, ἅτε οὐκ ἐπίκτητον ἔχουσα τὸ ἀγαθὸν οὐδὲ κατὰ μετοχὴν ὑπερκειμένου τινὸς καλοῦ τὸ καλὸν ἐν ἑαυτῇ δεχομένη, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸ ὅπερ ἐστὶ τῇ φύσει ἀγαθὸν οὖσα καὶ ἀγαθὸν νοουμένη καὶ ἀγαθοῦ πηγὴ ἁπλῆ τε καὶ μονοειδὴς καὶ ἀσύνθετος καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν μαχομένων ἡμῖν μαρτυρουμένη.

But the uncreated nature is far removed from this kind of difference (i.e. difference of more and less), inasmuch as it does not have goodness as something acquired and does not admit goodness into itself by participating in a transcendent good. Rather, in virtue of what it is by nature, it is good and is considered to be good and is testified to be a simple, uniform, and incomposite source of good even by our opponents.

Moore and Wilson: Whereas uncreated intelligible nature is far removed from such distinctions: it does not possess the good by acquisition, or participate only in the goodness of some good which lies above it: in its own essence it is good, and is conceived as such: it is a source of good, it is simple, uniform, incomposite, even by the confession of our adversaries.[97]

Hall: The uncreated nature is far away from such a distinction, inasmuch as it does not have good as something acquired, nor does it receive moral virtue into itself by participation in some higher moral virtue, but because it is by nature what goodness is in itself, and is perceived as goodness, and is attested

94 NPNF 5: 57.
95 Mateo-Seco and Bastero (eds.), *El 'Contra Eunomium I'*, 69.
96 GNO 1: 107.4–10.
97 NPNF 5: 60–1.

even by our opponents to be the fount of goodness, simple, uniform and uncompounded.[98]

The published translations lead us to believe that each passsage makes a different point, whereas I would argue that they all make the same point, which is most unambiguously stated in A. This is the point that, since God's goodness is not something God acquires, but is true of God by virtue of God's nature, we cannot conceive of any degrees in God or God's goodness. Moore and Wilson take the phrase *αὐτὸ ὅπερ ἐστίν* in B as a statement of the identity thesis, with the *αὐτό* presumably functioning predicatively. B therefore claims that God is identical with goodness and does not possess it, which contradicts the language of possession in A and C. Moreover, according to Moore and Wilson, the same locution in C means "in its own essence", a significantly different translation, which does not render the *αὐτό* as predicative. Hall takes the locutions in B and C to be about goodness rather than God or the divine, though he reads the locution *αὐτὸ καθό ἐστι* in A as referring to God. Thus, he takes the point of B and C to be a claim about the nature of goodness, whereas A is about the nature of God.

The crux is how to take *αὐτὸ ὅπερ ἐστίν* in B and C. If we read the phrase as doing the same work that *αὐτὸ καθό ἐστι* does in A, we can see that it does not modify the neuter *ἀγαθὸν* in B and C. At any rate, in order for this word to mean 'goodness', as opposed to the mere adjective 'good', it would need the article. The phrase is not explicating goodness; it is rather a locution, very much like the ones listed above, for the divine essence.[99] It should be read as if it were in dashes: the divine essence—in itself—is good. This helps explain why the phrase does not agree in gender with the rest of the sentence. This kind of emphatic use of *αὐτό*, not agreeing in gender with its surroundings, appears frequently in Gregory's corpus. I have translated

[98] Mateo-Seco and Bastero (eds.), *El 'Contra Eunomium I'*, 75.

[99] The similar phrase *ἐκεῖνο οὖσα ὅπερ ἐστι* is certainly a locution for the divine essence at *Eun.* 3.10.48 (GNO 2: 308.18–19); there it is parallel with *ἡ μὲν οὐσία . . . ὅ τι ποτὲ κατὰ τὴν φύσιν ἐστὶ*. Moreover, Johannes Zachhuber translates the phrase *ὅπερ ἐστὶν* at *Abl.* (GNO 3.1: 41.5) as "in what it is": 'Once Again: Gregory of Nyssa on Universals', *JTS* 56 (2005): 75–98 at 80. This implies that he takes it as a locution for the divine essence.

the phrase "in virtue of what it is"; C adds τῇ φύσει to make "in virtue of what it is by nature". This is how Moore and Wilson appear to take the locution in their translation of C: "in its own essence". Gregory's point is that the essence of God is good in virtue of itself rather than through acquiring this as a quality from outside.

We have now examined two crucial texts in which Gregory speaks of God's goodness as rooted in the nature, as not "acquired". Exegetically, there is no reason we need to read them as statements of the identity thesis. And logically, with the notion of divine goods as propria, Gregory does not need for them to be identical with the divine nature in order for them to be necessary concomitants of the divine nature. God's goodness is no more accidental than fire's heat. Yet, God's essence (whatever it is) and goodness are distinct just as fire's essence (whatever it may be) and fire's heat are distinct.

Gregory's understanding of the divine goods as propria forms the logical basis of a number of arguments in both anti-Eunomian and other polemical works. Propria, Porphyry tells us, "counter-predicate": if something is a laugher, it is a human; if something is a human, it is a laugher.[100] Gregory takes the contrapositive of these conditionals and makes polemical hay. Since (according to his view) the Son is fully God, the Son has all the divine propria (if anything is God, it is good, powerful, immortal, etc.). By removing any one of them, Gregory argues, one denies the Son's divinity. This is what Eunomius has done.[101] It is also what Apollinarius has done.[102] The basis of these arguments is the necessary relation between the divine nature and its propria, the goods.

The Reciprocity of the Goods

Thus far I have stressed the necessary relation that obtains between the divine goods and the divine nature. But this is only one aspect: just as the divine nature entails the goods (and vice versa), so too do the goods entail one another reciprocally. If one of them exists, they

[100] Whoever wrote the work that comes down to us as Basil's fourth book *Against Eunomius* was aware of this aspect of propria: see PG 29: 688BC.

[101] *Eun.* 3.9.5.

[102] *Apoll.* (GNO 3.1: 136–7).

all must exist. It is likely that this is not an entirely separate point from the one which I argued in the previous section, since all necessary properties of a thing (by definition) entail one another. Yet, there is clearly another source at work. This is the common philosophical doctrine of the 'unity of the virtues'.

I have argued elsewhere that Gregory appropriates this theme from philosophical ethics and applies it to both human virtues and the divine goods (which he also calls virtues).[103] But it is important to be precise about which version of the unity theme Gregory endorses. Some philosophers held that the virtues entail one another because they are in fact identical.[104] Gregory held that the virtues have a weaker unity than this: the virtues are distinct, but each is such that it reciprocally entails all the others.

Gregory's argument for this entailment rests on three crucial premises: first, that each virtue or good has an opposite; second, that this opposition is unmediated (a point we discussed already); third, that each virtue has a distinct account or definition that both distinguishes it from the other virtues and links it to them. The first and second premises imply that any given action of a relevant type will be characterized either by a virtue or its corresponding vice. The third premise helps us to specify what the type is: for instance, justice is defined as rendering to each his or her due; this limits the scope of activities that are potentially just or unjust to situations dealing with distribution of money, favours, political offices, and so forth.[105] This is justice's primary definition. But it is also defined in a secondary way by each of the other virtues' defining qualities. Consequently, in order for an action to be just, it must not only be a case of rendering to each his or her due, it must also be wise, temperate, prudent, and

[103] 'Gregory of Nyssa on the Reciprocity of the Virtues', *JTS* 58.2 (2007): 537–52.

[104] Terry Penner has argued that this is Socrates' position: 'The Unity of Virtue', in Gail Fine (ed.), *Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 560–86. For an overview of various ancient theories of the unity of virtue, see John M. Cooper, 'The Unity of Virtue', in idem, *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 76–117.

[105] In his homily on the Beatitude 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice', Gregory takes this definition of justice to imply that only those in power are even capable of justice—those without goods to render cannot render to each his or her due. See *beat.* 4 (GNO 7.2: 112.21ff.).

so on. Given the unmediated opposition between a virtue and its opposing vice, if the action in question fails to have any of these qualities just listed, it will be characterized by the opposite of that virtue. Accordingly, an unwise action is not simply unwise, it is also unjust. In order to have one virtue, one must have them all; failing in one, one has all the vices at least to some degree.

Gregory applies the same theory of reciprocity to both human and divine virtues. While the lists of virtues are somewhat different for the two cases (for example, God does not have temperance), in both instances it is clear that the virtue names are not simply diverse titles for a single virtue. Two considerations in particular suggest that we should not treat the virtues as identical: the first is that each virtue has its proper definition, a point we have already noted; the second is that Gregory, despite his endorsement of the inseparability and reciprocity of the virtues, actually believes it is possible to have one virtue *in some sense* without having the others, or, inversely, to lose one without losing the others. Let us take these two in turn.

Those who argue that the virtues are identical are under obligation to offer a definition that specifies the character that makes them all identical. For Socrates, virtue is the knowledge of good and evil. Justice is this knowledge; so is courage and all virtues; hence they are identical with each other.[106] As John Langan has argued, for Augustine, the virtues are identical with love.[107] Gregory never specifies any definition common to all virtues. Hence, it is unlikely that he would hold them to be identical; if he does, he owes us an account of what makes them identical.

The second point needs finessing, since as stated it is contradictory. It relies upon a distinction between perfect and imperfect virtues. Perfect justice is the virtue that causes one to fulfil the conditions of justice and the conditions of the other virtues. It is by definition inseparable from the other virtues. But imperfect justice, which presumably bears the name only by equivocation, may lead one to perform actions that are at least minimally just without being wise: returning a borrowed murder weapon to a sociopath who

[106] See Penner, 'The Unity of Virtue'.

[107] John P. Langan, SJ, 'Augustine on the Unity and the Interconnection of the Virtues', *HTR* 72 (1979): 81–95.

legitimately owns it, but who has confessed his crime to you and asked for it back.[108] It is not that this action is not just; it is that it is also characterized by the opposite of justice (since it is characterized by the opposite of wisdom, a secondary condition of justice). This is precisely like the distinction between true and false goods: the latter are in some sense goods; yet, they are mixed with their opposites. For Gregory, as for a number of philosophers before him, it is only the perfect virtues that are inseparable and reciprocally entailing.[109] However, the theoretical possibility of separated virtues shows that they cannot be identical.

We can now turn to a section from Gregory's *Catechetical Oration* where he applies this theory to the question of why God saved humanity by becoming incarnate. He imagines an objection: couldn't God have saved us by fiat (*θελήματι μόνῳ*)?[110] He takes this to be equivalent to asking if God could save us by power alone, without also acting in a way that is just, good, and wise.[111] He answers that God could not, and the argument is the reciprocity of the virtues. Before turning to the passage, it is important to note that 'good' in this context means 'merciful, loving, compassionate'. By arguing that this divine attribute is in no way at odds with the divine justice, Gregory is providing the ultimate anti-Marcionite argument, completing a tradition we first saw in very different form in Ptolemy. After appealing to the common notion of God, which for Gregory includes the attributes of goodness, justice, wisdom, as well as power, he writes:

It follows, therefore, in the economy we're presently considering, that there should not be a tendency for one of the names fitting to God to

[108] The example comes with changes from Plato, *Republic* 1.331c.

[109] The notion that only the perfect virtues are inter-entailing appears in Middle Platonist authors and goes back to Aristotle. See John Dillon, *Alcinous*, 181–3 (commentary on Alcinous, *Didaskalikos*, 29.4); Paula Gottlieb, 'Aristotle on Dividing the Soul and Uniting the Virtues', *Phronesis* 39 (1994): 275–90. The relevant Aristotle passages are *Nicomachean Ethics* 1144b30ff.; *Eudemian Ethics* 2.1, 1219a35ff.

[110] *Or. catech.* 17 (73.6 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 49); cf. 15 (64 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 44), 19 (78.6 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 53): *διὰ προστάγματος*. As noted by Srawley (p. 64, n. 7), the objection appears in Athanasius, *de Incarnatione* 44 and Origen, *Cels.* 4.3.4.

[111] See his reformulation at *or. catech.* 20 (78.11–12 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 53): . . . *μόνον δυνατὸν* . . .

be present, while another was absent. For, in general, not one of these lofty names by itself and separated from the others is a virtue, when taken individually.[112]

The second sentence is closely parallel to one in the fourth homily *On the Beatitudes*, where Gregory is talking about human virtues: "For it is not possible that any one kind of virtue, which has been separated from the others, could be a perfect virtue by itself."[113] Gregory immediately proceeds to give the reason for this:

For goodness is not truly good unless it is arranged along with justice, wisdom, and power (for that which is unjust, unwise, or powerless is not good); nor is power which is separated from justice and wisdom considered to be a virtue (for such a thing would be a beastly and tyrannical form of power). It is the same also with the rest: if wisdom is carried away outside of justice, or if justice is not seen along with power and goodness, then one would rather properly entitle such things vice.[114]

Gregory gives an account of God's action in the incarnation that shows how each of these divine virtues was active. This comes across most clearly when Gregory addresses the question of whether God dealt unjustly with the devil by seizing away humans who were justly enslaved to him (by their own free will). If so, then the divine virtues would be separable. We need not go into the (very entertaining) details of Gregory's response except to note that the divine wisdom devises a plan whereby God saves humans (and hence acts according

[112] *Or. catech.* 20 (78.14–79.3 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 53; Richardson, trans., *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 296, altered): *ἀκόλουθον τοίνυν ἐπὶ τῆς παρούσης οἰκονομίας μὴ τὸ μέν τι βούλεσθαι τῶν τῷ θεῷ πρεπόντων ἐπιφαίνεσθαι τοῖς γεγενημένοις, τὸ δὲ μὴ παρεῖναι. καθ' ὅλου γὰρ οὐδὲν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ τῶν ὑψηλῶν τούτων ὀνομάτων διεζευγμένον τῶν ἄλλων ἀρετὴ κατὰ μόνας ἐστιν·*

[113] PG 44: 1241.46–8: *Οὐδὲ γάρ ἐστι δυνατὸν ἕν τι τῆς ἀρετῆς εἶδος τῶν λοιπῶν διεζευγμένον, αὐτὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ τελείαν τὴν ἀρετὴν εἶναι.*

[114] *Or. catech.* 20 (79.3–12 Srawley; using the punctuation of Mühlenberg in GNO 3.4: 53.16–24): *οὔτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἀληθῶς ἐστιν ἀγαθὸν μὴ μετὰ τοῦ δικαίου τε καὶ σοφοῦ καὶ τοῦ δυνατοῦ τεταγμένον (τὸ γὰρ ἄδικον ἢ ἄσοφον ἢ αδύνατον ἀγαθὸν οὐκ ἔστιν), οὔτε ἡ δύναμις τοῦ δικαίου τε καὶ σοφοῦ κεχωρισμένη ἐν ἀρετῇ θεωρεῖται (θηριῶδες γάρ ἐστι τὸ τοιοῦτον καὶ τυραννικὸν τῆς δυνάμεως εἶδος). ὡςαύτως δὲ καὶ τὰ λοιπά, εἰ ἔξω τοῦ δικαίου τε καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τὸ σοφὸν φέροιτο, ἢ τὸ δίκαιον εἰ μὴ μετὰ τοῦ δυνατοῦ τε καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ θεωροῖτο, κακίαν ἄν τις μᾶλλον κυρίως τὰ τοιαῦτα κατονομάσειε·*

to his goodness) and does not rob the devil (thereby dealing justly with all parties).[115]

With Gregory, we are far from holding that divine simplicity entails that God only has a single property or that God has no properties—so far in fact that, in his hands, the doctrine of simplicity actually comes to entail that God has *multiple* properties. Why is it *simplicity* that entails this? Because it is the perfect virtues that are reciprocally entailing. And being a perfect virtue is just being a virtue without the admixture of that virtue's opposite. And this state of being unmixed, in turn, is one of Gregory's fundamental ways of describing the state of being simple.[116] So, if God is good and God is simple, then God's goodness is unmixed with its opposite—and, consequently, God is also powerful, just, wise, and so forth. These properties are at work in God's activities in creating the world and entering into it in the incarnation. As we have seen, for Ptolemy, because God is simple and perfect, God cannot interact with the world. For Gregory, God's creative and saving action is in no way an embarassment for the doctrine of simplicity; it is the display of God's pure and perfect goodness, wisdom, justice, and power.

SIMPLICITY AND THE TRINITY

Gregory's theology of simplicity as the unmixed divine perfection was not only useful in answering objections to the incarnation,[117] it also played a role in polemic against anti-Nicene Christians like Eunomius, opponents of the Spirit's divinity,[118] and 'Greek' polytheists.

[115] *Or. catech.* 21–3.

[116] See Warren Smith, *Passion and Paradise*, 194: "Simplicity in this sense is synonymous with moral purity; a simple nature, like God's, admits no admixture of contradictory qualities or impulses. Purgation restores that freedom . . . that God conferred on human nature in the beginning, but which we forfeited through our evil choices."

[117] The objections may well have come from actual 'pagan' or 'Jewish' opponents (the purported opponents of the *Catechetical Oration*), but we do not know this. The objections could well have come from Porphyry's lost anti-Christian works.

[118] *Maced.* (GNO 3.1: 95).

For Gregory, the rhetoric of simplicity provided a single manoeuvre that could simultaneously take out all these foes.

First, the pagans:

But if [someone] has no doubt of God's existence and is carried away by ideas of a plurality of gods, we should use with him some such argument as follows: Does he think the divine is perfect or imperfect? If, as he probably will, he testifies to the perfection of the divine nature, we must require him to acknowledge that this perfection extends to every aspect of the Deity, so that the divine may not be regarded as a mixture of opposites (*ὡς ἂν μὴ σύμμικτον ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων θεωροῖτο τὸ θεῖον*), of defect and perfection. Now, whether it be with respect to power, or the idea of goodness, or wisdom or incorruption, or eternity or any other relevant attribute of God, he will agree, as a reasonable inference, that we must think of the divine as perfect in every case.

Once this is granted, it would not be difficult to bring round his thinking, with its diffuse ideas of a multitude of gods, to the acknowledgement of a single deity. For if he grants that perfection is to be entirely attributed to the subject of our discussion, and yet claims that there are many perfect beings with the same characteristics, this follows. In the case of things marked by no differences but considered to have identical attributes, it is absolutely essential for him to show the particularity of each. Or else, if the mind cannot conceive particularity in cases where there are no distinguishing marks, he must give up the idea of any distinction.[119]

Without a mixture of contraries, Gregory argues, one cannot get the distinctions of "more or less" (*πλέον καὶ ἔλαττον*) that would be necessary for polytheism.[120] His argument assumes that it is impossible for co-ordinate beings to be characterized by exactly the same properties, a notion that has precedent in earlier Christian writing, such as the arguments of Dionysius of Alexandria and Methodius of Olympus against the notion that matter is ingenerate alongside God. But Gregory is thinking also of his much more proximate debate with Eunomius. It may be shocking in light of Eunomius' stringent view of divine unity, but according to Gregory, Eunomius, just like the Greeks, has erred in

[119] *Or. catech.* praef. (4.4–5.10 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 6–7; trans. Richardson, 269).

[120] The principle that simplicity rules out contrariety, besides being logically obvious, is stated in the paragraph immediately preceding the extended quotation from the *Catechetical Oration*. It is also stated as a minimal condition of simplicity by Gregory at *Eun.* 1.683 and by Basil at *Eun.* 2.29.31–2.

introducing undue *multiplicity* into the divine realm. Gregory argues that the only way to get multiplicity in that realm is to introduce a mixture of contrary qualities, which is ruled out by divine simplicity. He wrote the *Catechetical Oration* most likely in the mid-380s, not five years after beginning his massive works against Eunomius,[121] and in the first of these books essentially the same argument appears.

Everyone knows that strictly speaking simplicity does not allow concepts of more and less to apply to the Holy Trinity. In a case where it is not possible to conceive any mixture and combination of qualities, but the mind apprehends a power without parts and composition, how and by what logic might the difference of greater and lesser be understood? One who determines that such comparisons be made must inevitably envisage the incidence of some qualities in the subject. He either conceives the difference between them in terms of exceeding and falling short, and thus brings the concept of size into the debate, or he is arguing that it is superior or inferior in goodness, power, wisdom and whatever else is piously attributed to the divine; and thus he will not escape the imputation of composition.[122]

The sentence that immediately follows is sentence A, which we discussed in 'The Goods as Propria of the Divine Nature' above. The point of the passage is that Eunomius must specify some basis for his belief in degrees of divine existence.[123] Gregory believes there can only be two bases: quantity, which is absurd in the case of God, and quality. For Gregory, degrees of being presuppose distinct *mixtures* of qualities, whereas there can be no mixture in connection with a simple subject. The reason, as Gregory proceeds to articulate, is that the mixture would have to be a

[121] On dating, see Gerhard May, 'Die Chronologie des Lebens und der Werke des Gregor von Nyssa', in Marguerite Harl (ed.), *Écriture et Culture Philosophique dans la Pensée de Grégoire de Nysse* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 51–67 at 60–1. There is a reference in *Catechetical Oration* 38 to earlier works on disputed points about the faith: 153.4–9 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 98.

[122] *Eun.* 1.232–3 (GNO 1: 94.26–95.12; trans. Stuart G. Hall in Mateo-Seco and Bastero (eds.), *El 'Contra Eunomium I'*, p. 69).

[123] The argument also appears in Gregory's short summary of Trinitarian doctrine, which has come down as *ep.* 24 to Heracleianus, at 24.12–13 (GNO 8.2: 78; trans. Anna Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, 195). This was probably written in early or mid-381, around the time of writing the more well-known, shorter dogmatic works: *Trin.* (= *ep.* 33 in Silvas's numbering; a shorter version has been trasnsmitted as Basil, *ep.* 189), *tres dii*, and *diff. ess.* (= *ep.* 35 in Silvas's numbering and transmitted as Basil, *ep.* 38 in some mss.).

mixture of the goods and their opposites.[124] This forces Eunomius into a dilemma: he must either give up subordinationism or surrender his belief in the goodness of the Son and Spirit. Gregory believes Eunomius has unwittingly fallen into a crypto-Manichaeism, introducing contrariety into the divine realm, which as simple should be free of this.[125]

This is one of the ways in which Gregory's notion of divine simplicity as entailing the pure, perfect possession of all the goods functions polemically against Eunomius. Another, which I mentioned above, is the charge that, by denying one of the divine propria of the Son, Eunomius must deny them all. But what about Gregory's own doctrine of the Trinity? How can he maintain a distinction between common and peculiar properties for the Trinitarian persons and call the Trinity simple? We need not invent arguments to accuse Gregory of violating simplicity here, for Eunomius already wrote them (against Basil) in his *Apology for the Apology*.

> [Eunomius] says that we make God composite by virtue of the fact that, on one hand, we posit light as common, while, on the other hand, we divide one [light] from another by certain properties and various differences. For that which is joined by a single commonality but divided by certain differences and concurrences of properties is no less composite.[126]

Once again, it is remarkable how accurate Eunomius' summary of Basil's doctrine is, which should lead us to nuance the claim that the two sides simply talked past each other.[127] He does add the term "difference" to Basil's account of what distinguishes the persons, but this does not necessarily distort Basil's notion of distinguishing features unique to Father and Son. Whatever one calls the differentiating characteristics of the Father, Son, and Spirit, it is hard to see

[124] The combination of goodness, power, wisdom, and so forth must not technically constitute a 'mixture', presumably on the grounds that mixtures are combinations of opposites.

[125] See, e.g., *Eun.* 1.504–23; 3.9.4; 3.10.51ff. This aspect of anti-Eunomian polemic goes back to Basil and has been discussed by Michel Barnes: *Power of God*, 264–70.

[126] Eunomius, *AA* apud Greg. Nyss., *Eun.* 3.10.46 (GNO 2: 307.17–23): *φησὶ γὰρ ὅτι καὶ σύνθετον ἡμῖν τὸν θεὸν ἀπεργάζεται τῷ κοινὸν μὲν ὑποθέσθαι τὸ φῶς, ἰδιότησι δέ τισι καὶ ποικίλαις διαφοραῖς θατέρου χωρίζειν θάτερον. σύνθετον γὰρ οὐδὲν ἧττον τὸ κοινότητι μιᾷ συνενηνεγμένον, διαφοραῖς δέ τισι καὶ συνδρομαῖς ἰδιωμάτων χωριζόμενον.*

[127] Found, e.g., in Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*, 96–7.

how the conflux of these characteristics with the common properties that they share does not make them composite.

Though by now we should be accustomed to the Cappadocian penchant for drawing distinctions, it may still shock us that Gregory responds to this accusation of composition by drawing an additional distinction. For Gregory, there are three items to be accounted for, not just the two Eunomius mentioned (common and peculiar or proper characteristics). For Gregory, there is also the divine essence taken by itself (*ἡ μὲν οὐσία καθ' ἑαυτήν*), which is technically neither of these two according to its own account—whatever that is (*ὅ τι ποτὲ κατὰ τὴν ὕσιν ἐστί*).[128] Each of the three items has its own account.[129] This marks a departure from Basil's position: for him, the common items were predicated as the formula of essence; for Gregory, these are two distinct categories. Perhaps Gregory's distinction between essence and substance allowed him to draw the distinction between common properties, which name the substance, and the essence, which is utterly unknowable.

Eunomius' charge was that the mixture of common and peculiar necessarily leads to composition. Gregory's response allows him to argue that the essence or nature is not subject to composition.[130] It remains what it is without admixture of common and peculiar.

This specific argument has not been featured in the recent debate over the status of the divine essence as a universal in Gregory. The debaters are Johannes Zachhuber, who believes that the divine nature or essence is a unity-in-diversity, the collection of the individuals who share in it (in the same way that human nature is), and Richard Cross, who believes it is an indivisible monad, yet immanent in the persons and inseparable from them.[131] Gregory's response to Euno-

[128] *Eun.* 3.10.48 (GNO 2: 308.17–18).

[129] *Eun.* 3.10.49 (GNO 2: 309.1–2): *ἄλλος ὁ τῆς κοινότητος καὶ ἄλλος ὁ τῆς οὐσίας ἐστὶ λόγος*. By 'commonality' in this context, Gregory does not mean 'commonality' taken in the abstract (i.e. what it means to be common), but the common features of the divinity. He is claiming that the account one can give of the common properties shared by Father, Son, and Spirit is different from the account one would give, if it were possible, of their essence.

[130] This is the conclusion of the argument stated at *Eun.* 3.10.49 (GNO 2: 309.2–4).

[131] Chronologically: Johannes Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa*; Richard Cross, 'Gregory of Nyssa on Universals'; Johannes Zachhuber, 'Once Again: Gregory of Nyssa on Universals'.

mius' charge of composition lends support to Cross's position. In fact, it is a clear example of Gregory's tendency to distinguish between common and peculiar (which we might misstate as unity and diversity) in the Trinity—a tendency that is incompatible with Zachhuber's reading. According to Zachhuber, the *ousia* is simultaneously one and many, common and peculiar.[132] This is because it is the collection of the 'individuals' that share it. But this flies in the face of Gregory's insistence, which Cross has stressed, upon the utter indivisibility of the divine *ousia*. In fact, in the passage I have just discussed, he does not even hold the *ousia* to be common or universal. Yet, if we read this passage in light of others, we can qualify this somewhat, since we know that the common terms (i.e. the propria) name the divine substance and that Gregory is also able to call the persons the substance.[133] The *ousia* is not, then, entirely separate from the common qualities the persons share or from the persons themselves; certainly Gregory clearly denies that it is a fourth item over and above them. But it is logically distinct (distinct in account) in such a way that, whatever its account is, it is *not* a composite of the account of the persons' individual characteristics and that of their shared, common characteristics.

This distinction, in Gregory's mind at least, preserves the simplicity of the *ousia*; but it is hard to see how, on this account, the persons can be simple. I have examined this passage from his third book *Against Eunomius* because here Gregory directly addressed the issue of composition and did so with precision. Yet, the argument there appears to be lacking on just the point Eunomius was pushing. Divine simplicity, I conclude, was useful as a blunt instrument to bludgeon Eunomius with (and for Eunomius to bludgeon in return), but was not fully and coherently integrated into Gregory's own trinitarian theology. When challenged, Gregory merely asserts the simplicity of the divine nature, rather than adequately responding to Eunomius. Yet, that would be to judge the quality of Gregory's arguments. Certainly, if we ask the question of his

[132] See esp. 'Once Again: Gregory of Nyssa on Universals', 82–3.

[133] On the latter, see *comm. not.* (GNO 3.1: 20.24–5): *οὐσία ὁ πατήρ, οὐσία ὁ υἱός, οὐσία τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα καὶ οὐ τρεῖς οὐσίαι*. Discussed at Cross, 'Gregory of Nyssa on Universals', 401 n. 91.

motivations, it is clear that he was concerned to reconcile pro-Nicene trinitarianism with the doctrine of simplicity. It is clear, for instance, that the immateriality of God, one of the key implications of simplicity, is central to his articulation of how God can be Father, Son, and Spirit without this implying material division. We might more charitably look at his attempt to reconcile simplicity with trinitarianism as an incomplete task rather than as a logical blunder.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE SIMPLICITY OF THE SOUL

One reason why speaking well about the Trinity is an incomplete task, according to Gregory, is that our souls are obsessed with limited, material goods. This is not, of course, to say that materiality is bad for Gregory; merely that it is misused when one is unable to see the beauty resting upon the matter as an incitement to ascend to Beauty itself.[134] And with this, we are back to the distinction between true and false goods. In this section, I will show how the account of simplicity we have seen thus far informs Gregory's anthropology and psychology, in particular his account of original human life and the eschatological state for which we now strive.

For Gregory, to say that God is simple entails that God possesses all the goods. Interestingly, Gregory uses similar language to describe human life. This life was originally 'uniform', at which time humans enjoyed all good things; in the eschaton, when the soul has been purified, it will be simple, conforming itself to the Good which is its only delight. What unites these various uses of the term 'simple' and equivalents like 'uniform' is the sense of simplicity as purity and perfection: the unmixed possession of a true good.[135] While Basil viewed simplicity as primarily a negative term, simply equivalent to 'partlessness' and 'incomposite', Gregory gives it a positive sense,

[134] See *virg*. 11.1.21–6, which contains an allusion to Plotinus, *Enn*. 6.3.4.1–8, *not*, as commonly (and understandably) claimed, *Enn*. 1.6.1.20.

[135] See, again, Warren Smith, *Passion and Paradise*, 194.

which we have seen throughout this chapter. To be simple is to possess goodness in an undiluted manner. We have seen that this is true of God: it is also true of humanity. The crucial difference is that, whereas God is purely and simply good by nature, humans are good by participation—and, as we have seen, humans in turn impart participated goodness to the rest of created, sensible reality.

In his anthropological works *On the Making of Humanity* and *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Gregory explains that what it means to be created in the image of God is that humanity was endowed with all good things (and only these). We might think this state of having the fullness of good things is incompatible with simplicity (after all, we are talking about multiple virtues or goods), but Gregory says that human life at this point was "uniform": "and by 'uniform', I mean that life which is seen in the good alone and which is unmixed with evil".[136] This life is uniform in that, for whatever good it possesses, it has it and not its opposite. Gregory contrasts this uniformity with the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good *and evil*: what makes that tree problematic is its mixed character.[137] God only forbade "that which has a nature mixed together from opposites".[138] Unmixed evil does not exist. But unmixed goodness does, and this is what Gregory calls uniformity or simplicity.

For Gregory, the end will resemble the beginning, even if it will also exceed it. In *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Gregory describes the state of the soul after its purification.

So when the soul has put off its various natural motions, it becomes godlike. And when it has passed beyond desire, it dwells where desire had previously raised it, no longer allowing any place in itself for hope or for memory . . . It is informed with the propria of the divine nature and imitates the transcendent life such that nothing else remains in it besides the loving disposition, which naturally attaches itself to the good. For love is this: the inward

[136] *Anim. et res.* (PG 46: 81B): *Μονοειδὲς ἦν ἡ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ζωή, μονοειδὲς δὲ λέγω τὴν ἐν μόνῳ τῷ ἀγαθῷ ὁρωμένην, καὶ πρὸς τὸ κακὸν ἀνεπίμικτον.*

[137] See Richard A. Norris, Jr., 'Two Trees in the Midst of the Garden (Genesis 2:9b): Gregory of Nyssa and the Puzzle of Human Evil', in Paul Blowers et al. (eds.), *In Dominico eloquio = In Lordly Eloquence: Essays in Patristic Exegesis in Honor of Robert L. Wilken* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 218–41 at 241.

[138] *Anim. et res.* (PG 46: 81B): *ἀπείργων δὲ μόνου ἐκείνου ᾧ σύμμικτος ἦν ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων ἡ φύσις.*

attachment to what is pleasing. So when the soul has become simple, uniform and exactly godlike, it finds the truly simple and immaterial good, that which alone is really worthy of love and desire, and attaches itself to it and mingles with it through the motion and activity of love, conforming itself to that which is always being grasped and found.[139]

This passage ties together some central themes from this chapter. Gregory speaks of the purified soul as simple (naturally, since simplicity is purity for Gregory, or is closely associated with purity). This does not mean that the soul has only one attribute, with which its essence is identical: it is "informed with the propria of the divine nature". But the title 'simplicity' is not meaningless, for the (apparent) multiplicity it contains at this point corresponds exactly to the (apparent) multiplicity that God always possesses by nature. The soul comes to be characterized by the propria that the divine nature eternally and necessarily bears. We spoke earlier about the soul's choice of criteria of goodness, and noted that its "loving disposition" follows this choice. In this passage, we learn that this disposition is all that remains among the various psychological faculties in the soul: where there is no need for hope or memory, there remains only love, the attachment to true goodness, that is, goodness which is in no way mixed with its opposite. This good, Gregory says, is "always being grasped and found": it never is grasped in such a way that there would be nothing new to discover; yet, it is truly being found. It is unique among all so-called goods in that to seek it is to find it.

[139] *Anim. et res.* (PG: 93BC): *Ἐπειδὰν οὖν καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ πάντα τὰ ποικίλα τῆς φύσεως ἀποσκευασαμένη κινήματα θεοειδὴς γίνεται, καὶ ὑπερβᾶσα τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἐν ἐκείνῳ ᾖ, πρὸς ὃ ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπισυμίας τέως ὑπήρετο, οὐκέτι τινὰ σχολὴν δίδωσιν ἐν ἑαυτῇ, οὔτε τῇ ἐλπίδι, οὔτε τῇ μνήμῃ . . . καὶ οὕτω τὴν ὑπερέχουσαν μιμεῖται ζωὴν τοῖς ἰδιώμασι τῆς θείας φύσεως ἐμμορφωθεῖσα, ὡς μηδὲν ὑπολειφθῆναι τῶν ἄλλων αὐτῇ, πλὴν τῆς ἀγαπητικῆς διαθέσεως, φυσικῶς τῷ καλῷ προσφυομένης. Τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἡ πρὸς τὸ καταθύμιον ἐνδιάθετος σχέσις. Ὅταν οὖν ἡ ἁπλῆ καὶ μονοειδὴς καὶ ἀκριβῶς θεοείκελος ἡ φυχὴ γινομένη εὕροιτο ἀληθῶς ἁπλοῦν τε καὶ ἄϋλον ἀγαθόν, ἐκεῖνο τὸ μόνον τῷ ὄντι ἀγαπητικὸν καὶ ἐράσμιον προσφύεται τε αὐτῷ καὶ συνανακιρνᾶται διὰ τῆς ἀγαπητῆς κινήσεώς τε καὶ ἐνεργείας, πρὸς τὸ ἀεὶ καταλαμβανόμενόν τε καὶ εὑρισκόμενον ἑαυτὴν μορφοῦσα·* I have made two changes to the PG text: first, I have changed grave accents before commas to acute; second, I read with Migne's B ms *τῷ ὄντι* instead of *τοιόν τι*.

SAVING GREGORY FROM HIS DEFENDERS

In this chapter, I have argued that Gregory, while following and defending his brother, expands upon Basil's account of the relation between the divine goodness and the divine nature. Gregory argues that goodness necessarily inheres in the divine nature, and is so constituted that each of the goods entails the others. In this discussion, I have stressed the non-identical relation between the goods and the divine nature (and among the goods). By doing this, I have hopefully blocked a major reading of divine simplicity as always entailing the identity thesis. I have, in other words, showed how Gregory's understanding of simplicity differs from the standard Thomist understanding.[140]

But in concluding this chapter I wish to return to an interpretation I mentioned in the introductions to this chapter and to the book as a whole. This reading is quite opposite to the Thomist reading: it holds that, for Gregory, the divine essence or substance or nature is entirely unknowable and incapable of being characterized in any way. If the identity thesis reading is Thomist, this reading is Palamite in inspiration. It holds Gregory as a precursor to the fourteenth-century distinction by Gregory Palamas of God's *ousia* and *energeiai*, the former of which, as simple, is entirely ineffable, whereas God is knowable through God's *energeiai*, which are not merely 'activities' but are God. If the Thomist reading presents Gregory in Eunomian garb, the Palamite reading dresses him more like Clement.

We can find the latter in a number of scholars influenced by the twentieth-century neo-Palamite revival. Some of these, like Christopher Stead, are not sympathetic with this theology, but nonetheless endorse it as a reading of the Cappadocians. Consider again the following passage: "the Cappadocians most opportunely, though unexpectedly, insist that the simplicity of the Godhead does not

[140] In his recent paper, 'Divine Simplicity and the Plurality of Attributes', Joseph O'Leary (explicitly following Petavius!) faults Gregory for failing to make essence and attributes identical. O'Leary's paper, which is philosophically penetrating as his work always is, is a self-conscious case of what is often merely implicit: that is, a reading of Gregory from the perspective of much later Latin theology.

preclude a multiplicity of descriptions, *epinoiai*. These, however, were thought to relate to the energies and relationships of the Godhead, leaving his simple substance unaffected; a position which I have given reason to reject."[141] Stead's opposition between an "unaffected" "simple substance" and "energies and relationships" is manifestly Palamite. What does Stead mean by "unaffected"? Apparently he has in mind something like 'uncharacterized'. This, we have seen, is false. Gregory never characterizes the divine essence, the 'what it is' of God; but he does characterize, describe, or delineate the divine substance or nature via its inherent propria, the divine virtues. In other words, Stead is wrong on the exegetical point that the position he describes is Gregory's position, whatever one thinks of Palamism as a theological option.

Others who read Nyssen as a proto-Palamite are theologically sympathetic with Palamism. In the introduction to this chapter, I cited Verna Harrison and Robert Brightman. A more recent example is David Bradshaw, who has published a survey of the use of the term *energeia*.[142] Bradshaw explicitly likens Gregory's claims to ignorance about the divine essence to Clement's discussion of divine ineffability in the *Stromateis*.[143] But the two, as I hope to have shown, are quite different, even if they overlap on some points such as their affirmation of divine infinity. For Clement, the first God is utterly ineffable in the sense that no term or concept we know has any referential efficacy with respect to him. For Gregory, this is true of the divine essence, the definition of God, but not true of God in general. In fact, we can even predicate terms of the divine *ousia* and *phusis*, while confessing that its essence remains unknown; that is, we can speak of the *ousia* and *phusis* so long as we are assuming the

[141] 'Divine Simplicity as a Problem', 267.

[142] To this list, one should add Archbishop Basil Krivocheine, 'Simplicity of the Divine Nature and the Distinctions in God, According to St. Gregory of Nyssa', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 21 (1977): 76–104. I discuss David Bradshaw rather than Krivocheine in detail here, not simply because Bradshaw's work is more recent, but because of the unmistakable philosophical force of Bradshaw's book.

David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See my review in *JHP* 45.3 (2007): 493–4.

[143] *Aristotle East and West*, 163.

distinction between these and the 'what it is' (τὸ τί ἐστι) of God, whatever that might be. While Clement denied that we can have knowledge of God, Basil and Gregory affirmed that we can, even if their notion of knowledge is far more complex and perhaps less stringent than Clement's (or Eunomius').

Bradshaw further argues that *all* positive (that is, all positive and non-trivial) terms used for God are not simply derived from divine *energeiai*, but actually refer to *energeiai*. Thus, not only 'judging' and 'seeing', but even 'good' and 'wise' are *energeiai*. He then claims that *energeiai* are not simply 'activities', but are God. But the argument for this claim presumes his first claim: he argues that *energeiai* are God because Gregory says that 'light' and 'truth' are God, and these are, on Bradshaw's reading, *energeiai*. But 'light' and 'truth' are not *energeiai*, or at least not merely that. In fact, the only passage where Bradshaw shows 'good' and 'just' being called *energeiai* by Gregory is ambiguous, as Bradshaw himself notes: "This passage is not wholly clear as to whether the divine names are actually names of the *energeiai* or are merely derived from the *energeiai*."[144] By a complex exegetical chain, he opts for the former possibility (that the names are names of the *energeiai*); but there is no reason why we cannot take the latter (that the names merely derive from the *energeiai*), and this fits much more plausibly not only with the current passage but with other passages, such as the one from the sixth homily *On the Beatitudes* which we discussed earlier in this chapter.[145] Gregory's point is not that God's goodness or justice are activities or *energeiai* (if this means something else), but that we learn that God is good through the displays of this goodness in scripture and in the created order (which is in turn 'read' in light of scripture). If we take Bradshaw's option, and make the goodness an *energeia* that in no way characterizes or reflects the divine *ousia*, then we will end up with the very problem he raises for Gregory. How, if the *energeiai* do not reflect the *ousia*, can we "understand God's external activity as in some way a manifestation—albeit a free manifestation—of His internal life"?[146] Clearly, on his reading, we cannot. But this is because of problems

144 Ibid. The passage is *Trin.* (GNO 3.1: 14.5–12; trans. in NPNF 5: 329).
145 See notes 68–72 above.
146 *Aristotle East and West*, 172.

with the position he is attributing to Gregory, and not because of problems with Gregory. To speak of divine *energeiai* that in no way reflect the nature or life of God is to pursue a line of argument not open to Gregory, given his concern to root the divine goods necessarily in the divine nature.

It turns out to be the ecclesiastical partisans, 'East' and 'West', who seek to appropriate Basil and Gregory for their polemics, who fail to understand these fourth-century bishops on their own terms. The subtle texture of their positions has been ground into something blandly identifiable with later theologies. The problem with this is not simply that it blinds us to the peculiarities of the theology of Basil and Gregory. It also causes us to overlook the way in which their debate with Eunomius helped to change the rules of theological epistemology *for 'East' and 'West'*. When we read their account of divine simplicity as embedded in their approach to knowing—and not knowing—God, we can perhaps see anew the point Christians found in speaking about simplicity in the first place.

Conclusion: The Transformation of Divine Simplicity

Basil and Gregory's notion that a certain class of divine attributes should be viewed as propria of the divine nature constitutes a unique construal of the doctrine of divine simplicity. Propria necessarily inhere in the natures of which they are propria, and do so uniquely, such that they serve as identifying markers for those natures. Accordingly, they make possible knowledge of those natures that is not merely relative or mind-dependent—that is not merely knowledge by *epinoia* (though we should not disparage this either). Yet, at the same time, propria do not define the essence. God's propria of goodness, wisdom, power, justice, and truth do not tell us what it is to be God. God is simultaneously known and unknown, and part of the theological task is stating clearly where the lines are drawn between these.

This position, I have argued, should be kept distinct from Clement's apophaticism and Eunomius' claims about knowing the divine essence. As I argued in Chapter 2, Clement's negative theology is rooted in his stringent account of what it means to know something in general. For this account, he draws on Aristotelian, Stoic, and Epicurean epistemology. In Chapter 4, I showed how Eunomius holds a similarly rigid standard of knowledge, at least in the case of a simple being: everything that one could know about God must be knowledge of God's essence. For Basil and Gregory, the 'debt' Eunomius says we owe, to know God as God is, is one we cannot repay. Fortunately, we are saved from such a debt by a revealed language that accommodates our weakness even while providing rich resources for theological reflection. Basil and Gregory take offence with Eunomius' reduction of this scriptural heritage to one claim: God is without origin. For the Cappadocian brothers, knowledge is inherently complex and the simplicity of God does not alter this basic

fact. God is simple; theology, and the life of those progressing into affinity and likeness to God, is complex.

Thus Basil and Gregory transformed divine simplicity. The afterlife of the Cappadocian contribution has not been part of this study, but it is worth offering some comment on how the theory I hope to have illumined changed the playing field of theological epistemology. In effect, they made the doctrine of divine simplicity compatible with a theology conscious of itself as *in via*: neither having arrived at comprehension nor forswearing language altogether. By their account, there is no need for a direct 'correspondence' between the state of the knower and the object of knowledge. To be sure, human nature in its origin and its eschatological state after purification is simple, according to Gregory, its knowledge and love unmixed with their opposite. As the soul is purified it does come to 'correspond', to mirror and bear the imprint of the object of its love. But this eschatological vision—though it shapes Christian practice and language in the here and now—does not preclude the kind of discursive task, full of distinctions and complications, necessitated by life in the (factious) Christian community. For Basil and Gregory, controversies are unfortunate phases in the life of the church, necessitated by heretical intrusions on pious Christian unanimity. While there is much in this view in need of deconstruction, we can nonetheless discern an eschatological reserve—a sense that here and now, one does not have the option of *not* engaging in controversy. As Gregory says in the preface to *Contra Eunomium* II, while he wishes the controversy had never arisen, as it is "I reckoned it a dreadful thing not to engage in the Christian struggle".[1] Theology may hope for its own consummation,[2] but it must go on. In some of the recent resurgence of interest in negative theology, one senses some hesitancy on this point. While this revival has offered admirable calls to eschew the parochialism and exclusivity of traditional historical theology in favour of comparative approaches across religious traditions,[3] while it has redis-

[1] *Eun*. 2.8 (GNO 1: 228; trans. Stuart Hall in Karfikova et al. (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II*, 60).

[2] Gregory likens reasoning to hope, both of which will become obsolete at the eschaton: *Pss. titt.* 1.119–23 (GNO 5: 67–8).

[3] See the searching study of J. P. Williams, *Denying Divinity: Apophasis in the Patristic Christian and Soto Zen Buddhist Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

covered within Christian tradition valuable resources for a pluralist approach to doctrine;[4] one must ask whether the current negative turn bespeaks a certain reluctance to engage in the messiness of delving into the contentious areas of theology, those areas where we scrutinize the foundational language of the Christian faith.[5] Traditional apophaticism of whatever form is misunderstood (and not worth recovery) if it is seen as opposed to the critical edge of theological enquiry.

What the theologian *cannot* do—from the perspective of Basil and Gregory—is declare an end to theological discussion (*pace* Richard Lim), an end that both Clement's and Eunomius' theologies announce.[6] To be sure, as Lim has argued, the Cappadocians (including Gregory of Nazianzus) have an elitist vision of theological practice, one that seeks to exclude certain voices from the discussion—for instance, the voices of the obnoxious money changer and baker about whom Gregory of Nyssa complains.[7] Still, we can ask if the logic of their position on divine simplicity and theological epistemology can be taken up fruitfully in an age like ours in which suspicion of elitism seems inseparable from basic intellectual integrity,[8] or if it cannot withstand the translation from their context to ours. However one

[4] See Kevin Corrigan and L. Michael Harrington's superb essay 'Pseudo-Dionysius', in O. Hammer (ed.), *The Invention of Sacred Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). I am grateful to Professor Corrigan for allowing me to see a copy of this in advance of publication. Deirdre Carabine suggests we should even read Gregory in this way, as tired of the merely semantic distinctions between himself and Eunomius. This follows from her claim, not quite accurate in my view, that, for Gregory, "No term can be applied literally to God": *The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena* (Louvain: Peters/Eerdmans, 1995), 251–2.

[5] I am indebted here to Rowan Williams's comments: "The impatience of some modern Anglo-Saxon theologians with the dogmatic tradition sometimes seems in part an impatience with debate, conflict, ambivalence, polysemy, paradox." 'Trinity and Revelation', in *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 132; cf. also 'The Unity of Christian Truth', in ibid. 16–28.

[6] See Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, Power and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (discussed briefly above in Chapter 5).

[7] *Deit.* (GNO 10.2: 121). Readers interested in the peculiarities of Basil's 'elitism' can consult Emmanuel Amand de Mendieta, 'The Pair *ΚΗΡΥΓΜΑ* and *ΔΟΓΜΑ* in the Theological Thought of St. Basil of Caesarea', *JTS* n.s. 16 (1965): 129–42; idem, *The 'Unwritten' and 'Secret' Apostolic Traditions in the Theological Thought of St. Basil of Caesarea*, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers, no. 13 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965).

[8] See, e.g., Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy*, 104–5.

answers this question, the achievements of the Cappadocians are unmistakable. While Eunomius argues against the theological use of *epinoia* on the grounds that it involves a sequence of prior and posterior, whereas God in his simplicity is beyond such sequences, the Cappadocians parse the condition of being a human knower of God from the reality of God. They view human knowledge less as a 'map' of the divine reality than as ongoing self-scrutiny in light of that reality. They move theology away from the need for definition (in the sense underlying the principle of the epistemological priority of definition) and for finality which paradoxically drove both Clement and Eunomius—and anyone who takes language of theological 'science' without a healthy dose of irony.

Perhaps Basil's and Gregory's greatest contribution to theological epistemology is just such an ironic account of what 'knowing' means in theology. As Kopecek suggested, their controversy with Eunomius was Christianity's first epistemological controversy, and it has coloured all subsequent debate on this topic. Whether participants in such debates draw directly upon Basil or Gregory or not, they speak in a context where certain options are simply not on the table for Christians, where they have been taken off in part through Basil's and Gregory's labours, in part through those of their pro-Nicene allies. In the Eunomian controversy, we see perhaps more clearly than anywhere else in the early development of doctrine the clash between a notion of science relatively untamed by properly theological concerns, science as objective knowledge of facts, and a notion of knowledge as loving affection directed toward the Good. Of course, something that looks like the objectivist account has continued to attract advocates over the years. Thomas Aquinas famously articulated an account of *sacra doctrina* as a science. But the point is that, after Basil's and Gregory's realignment of knowing with loving, the language of theology as science, even for Thomas, becomes perforce ironic.[9] Not that their efforts should be

[9] See especially Lewis Ayres, 'On the Practice and Teaching of Christian Doctrine', *Gregorianum* 80 (1999): 33–94 at 36: "the central paradox of Christian doctrine results from it operating on the basis of principles that it does not possess"; and Eugene Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), ch. 1. As Rogers makes clear, for Thomas, "In sacred doctrine we have a science without scientists" (36). Thus, "Thomas's baptism of Aristotle has taken the unity of *scientia* apart" (39).

viewed as heroic and unprecedented: their account draws on a wide range of sources. Nor is it perfectly consistent. But underlying all their efforts is the sense that, as Basil says, "knowledge has many meanings", and that what we might speak of as the focal meaning of knowledge is *loving union*.[10] And once this becomes not just an individual theological proposal, but part of how Christians think about what it means to know God, the option represented by Eunomius fades into insignificance. Once there comes to be consensus around the notion that 'God' means the perfect, self-sufficient, un-contradictable goodness we all innately need and love, the notion of God Basil and Gregory articulate with such force, one can no longer speak of knowing God in a way that does not implicate the knower in some way.[11] One also cannot speak of human knowledge without implicating *God* in the act of knowing, a point which is perhaps clearest in Basil's insistence on the necessity of the illumination of the Son and the Spirit for humans to perceive the Father—as we come to perceive light *in* light.[12] This is not in any way to suggest that Aetius, Eunomius, or their allies lacked personal piety and genuine religious motivations. It is a point about their theological epistemology, about their notion of the epistemological 'debt' humans owe. To be sure, one can oppose their notion and still speak of theology as a science. But since it makes no sense to pursue 'knowledge for the sake of knowledge (alone)' when it comes to God, such language must be self-conscious, ironic, and analogical.

This kind of perspective cannot help but transform what we mean when we attribute agency to God. If goodness is what we mean when we say 'God', then theology can no longer be embarrassed by divine acts of self-giving. Rather, these provide the entry point for our participation in God's life. The problem is no longer, as it was for Ptolemy, how to reconcile one's belief in such acts with one's belief that God is simple and perfect. Rather, because one believes God to be simple and perfect goodness, one as it were 'expects' God to act in

[10] *Epp.* 234–5. For a contemporary account of the nature of theology that refuses to reduce truth and knowing to a single sense that is determined by 'science' or Enlightenment universal reason, see Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

[11] For a more recent rendition of this theme, see Sebastian Moore, *The Inner Loneliness* (New York: Crossroad, 1982).

[12] Basil, *Eun.* 1.17; *Spir.* 22–3, 47, *inter alia.*

the world. Thus, Gregory argues that the incarnation, for instance, is fully reflective of who God is (as far as we can know this), that is, of the divine propria.

We can now come back to Stead's criticism, which one finds rather widely in modern theology, that simplicity is incompatible with a 'biblical' notion of God's activity. There is a construal of the category 'biblical' here that is not without its own problems; on what grounds does Stead claim that patristic readings of scripture are less 'biblical' than his own? Part of the response to Stead is simply to challenge the hegemony of a single reading of scripture. But Stead's assumptions about scripture, which he shares with many contemporary theologians, cannot be all that lies behind his concern to save belief in divine activity from philosophical dismissal. Stead's premise that simplicity (at least in its more austere versions) is incompatible with such activity is not entirely unlike Ptolemy's, though of course their underlying doctrinal commitments are entirely different. Ptolemy still accounted for divine activity; he simply relegated it to the level of the non-simple intermediary. However, like all of us today, Stead operates in the shadow of modern deism, which denies providential action to God. His impulse to ward off any notion that will end with deism is theologically commendable. He is keenly aware of how simplicity was used by Aristotle in his doctrine of the Unmoved Mover and by Plotinus in his doctrine of the One. And with the striking parallels between Aristotle and Plotinus on the one hand and modern deism on the other, he is not entirely unjustified in seeing the language of simplicity as leading inescapably in this direction, if one is consistent in employing it.

Do Basil and Gregory have an answer to Stead's worry? It is important to be clear that they both do and do not. They do have an account of divine activity as reflecting and manifesting the propria of divine nature, properties which do not violate divine simplicity. This is surely a strong resource for answering Stead. However, since they obviously were not in conversation with modern deism (or other modern problems), one must not expect to find in their texts ready answers.

Still, we can say more than this. If deism holds sway over our imagination, this is because we can conceive once again of the plausibility of just the kind of objectivist theological epistemology

Basil and Gregory rejected. Let me be clear: Eunomius was no deist. My point is that the dominant form of modern deism, the kind against which Stead and other theologians react, depends essentially on what Charles Taylor has recently called, following Heidegger, "the Age of the World-picture".[13] For Taylor, deism depends on looking at the universe as if from nowhere, impartially acknowledging that there is a Creator, but one with whom creation can necessarily have no relation. Deism is not simply a denial of divine providence. In order to gain the kind of force it has, it requires also a picture of the world as self-regulating, operating according to fixed laws. It also requires a picture of the self as "buffered" (in Taylor's terms): blocked off by the self's very nature from supernatural influence. The world too comes to be seen as "buffered". The world, conceived thus, is once again a barrier to God's activity. As Taylor makes clear, deism is important for historians and theologians to reflect upon *not* because it is a widespread contemporary option, but because it makes possible an entire way of viewing the world as fully intelligible apart from divine agency.

At this point we see that implicit in deism and its legacy is an entire set of descriptions of what 'self', 'world', and 'God' mean, descriptions that are antithetical to Gregory's theology. For Gregory, the only barrier to God is evil, and this cannot exist outside of acts performed by agents with rational wills. Since the only opposite of God (of *the Good*) is evil, and since the world is in no way evil, the world is no barrier to divine activity. Here we see the revolution that occurred between Ptolemy's time and Gregory's. The transformation Gregory helped to bring about is what is at stake in modern debates over deism and its legacy. If we believe Gregory is right, deism loses its force. Deism only gains traction, only seizes our imaginations, if we reject Gregory's picture.

Consequently, the transformation Basil and Gregory wrought cannot be part of the Christian *past* only, even if our context is radically different from theirs. Rather, those taking up the task of Christian doctrine today must ask again how their transformation can be re-envisioned: not how one can *repeat* their points, but how

[13] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 232.

one can become "co-eval" with their accomplishment.[14] One must continually seek for ways to show what it means that 'God' and 'world' are not opposites. One cannot state at the outset what this will look like. However, for a theological proposal to be recognizably Christian, it must involve a deconstruction of this binary of God and world, where the terms are understood as opposites. I hope the current investigation has shown, first, that Basil and Gregory lie somewhere behind this very definition of theological practice, and, second, that the doctrine of divine simplicity does not lend support to the view of God as the *opposite* of the world. Divine simplicity tells us that God is *distinct* from the world, not that God is opposed to it in such a way that God cannot by definition act in the world. Divine simplicity will always sanction contradiction. But divine activity in the world is not a contradiction in terms. As Augustine said in his own criticism of pagan ways of understanding divine mediation, "true divinity cannot be contaminated by the flesh".[15] God's healing contact with human flesh in Jesus Christ does not contaminate God; it cleanses humanity. To believe otherwise is not simply to denigrate the world God has created; it is to misunderstand and limit God by setting up the world as a barrier to God's saving activity.

Now, if Basil and Gregory lie behind this transformation of perspective, it does not follow that one who accepts the transformation must accept every detail of their account of divine simplicity. Their account occupies a happy midpoint between pure apophaticism and the identity thesis. Nonetheless, modern supporters of either of these options, or of quite different perspectives, can surely make common cause with the transformation they achieved. Of course, there is always danger of reading one's pet doctrine into Basil or Gregory. But debate over who gets to read the Cappadocians should not blind us to points of commonality. I suspect that members of various traditions find the Cappadocian alternative to the modern "buffered" world and self a non-negotiable part of Christian identity. If an Eastern Orthodox follower of Lossky and a Western Thomist disagree over the identity thesis, but both want to read the Cappadocians as

[14] I borrow this language from Rowan Williams (*Arius*, 22–5), who is drawing on the anthropological work of Johannes Fabian.

[15] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 9.17.

allies, this obviously does not need to lead to rivalry. Perhaps it can spur renewed appreciation of the common legacy of pro-Nicene theology in the various 'eastern' and 'western' forms of Christianity.

Naturally, questions remain. While I have given attention to differences among the various texts of Basil and Gregory, I have nonetheless offered a relatively synthetic account of their theology. There is need for further work to situate this account more concretely in the specific historical circumstances of each work.

Moreover, many theologians and philosophers will continue to find Basil's and Gregory's account of simplicity unacceptable. One might ask, for instance, whether they have a good answer to the problem of divine freedom. Perhaps one could say that, just to the extent that they succeed in rooting divine activity in the divine propria, they fall into the same trap that catches proponents of the identity thesis: the trap of denying that God is in any meaningful sense free. If the 'pattern' of divine activity—God's justice, goodness, wisdom, and power—is 'concurrent' with the divine nature and not dependent on some free act of God, is God not compelled to act as God does? If God cannot choose between courses of action since one course is bound up with God's nature, then the conclusion seems inescapable. It does seem that the same problem attends the Cappadocian brothers' theory and the identity thesis.

Indeed, when placed in broader fourth-century context, Basil and Gregory seem particularly exposed to this charge. Athanasius divided acts of divine will (such as the act of creating) from acts of divine nature (such as the Father begetting the Son). And Eunomius spoke of divine activity as separate from divine substance. The objection might fall flat if offered against either of these thinkers, despite their differences. But, by making the divine will, along with the divine propria, concurrent with the divine nature,[16] the Cappadocian brothers seem to have precluded a simple appeal to divine free will. It is not the case (*pace* Bradshaw) that God can "*do* otherwise without *being* otherwise".[17] Whether one views this as a problem depends to a large extent on whether one views libertarian freedom as the only kind there is. It also depends on whether 'otherwise' means different *in kind*.

[16] Cf. *or. catech.*1 (9–11 Srawley; GNO 3.4: 10).
[17] David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West*, 272.

The question of simplicity and the necessity or freedom of God's acts is a common theme in contemporary discussions of simplicity among philosophers of religion, yet it is a theme that has been almost entirely absent from the current study. My focus has been on the doctrine of simplicity in relation to questions of how humans know God, and I have suggested that Basil and Gregory put forth a unique (and potentially still compelling) account of this. Indeed, in my view, they are to no small degree responsible for what we take to be the norm in theological epistemology: for the view that no impartial, wholly objective perspective is possible or desirable in knowing God, that the quest for an entirely non-subjective science of God is illusory. Yet, there are a number of questions that are not addressed, let alone solved, with their account. I am not suggesting, then, that we hail Basil and Gregory as the champions of the doctrine of simplicity *tout court*, merely that we note how their unique version of the doctrine changed how we think about theological epistemology. That is, while we may be left with questions, we have learned from them to be suspicious of any answer that tells us either nothing or too much. We have also learned from them to be suspicious of approaches to problems like this that adopt the 'impartial spectator' perspective, approaches that fail to take into account how the project of knowing God entails a transformation of one's love.

As will be clear from previous discussion, the problem of freedom and necessity is not the only problem that lingers over the account of simplicity in Basil and Gregory. It is also unclear how simplicity is at the end of the day compatible with their positive statements about the relations between the Trinitarian persons. To be sure, the language of simplicity provides them with polemical resources for criticizing Eunomius' doctrine of God: they accuse Eunomius of introducing contrariety and opposition, which are incompatible with simplicity, into the divine realm. But, in articulating their own account of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as sharing common properties and individuated by peculiar properties, they may stretch the language of simplicity beyond recognizable bounds.[18] A number of attempts have been made to

[18] Cf. Christopher Stead, 'Ontology and Terminology', in Heinrich Dörrie, Margarete Altenburger, and Uta Schramm (eds.), *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 107–27 at 119.

save simplicity in light of the Trinitarian mystery: consider, for instance, the medieval Latin notion of subsistent relations, which says that relations between the persons are not to be thought of as in the category of relation, but of substance. Of course we cannot say how Basil and Gregory would view this. It might strike them as the same kind of category mistake that Eunomius made when he said that God's ingeneracy names God's substance. Still, the fact that adherents of 'subsistent relations' would stress the incomprehensibility of such relations, even while explicating the logic of the terms used, is itself a testament to the pervasive transformation Basil and Gregory wrought. Basil and Gregory insist on the utter mysteriousness of God's Trinitarian life, and yet they simultaneously maintain a deep suspicion of the kind of mystification they see inherent in Eunomius' understanding of religious language, which utterly rejects ordinary usage as a guide to speaking about God. For Basil and Gregory, God is mysterious, eternally escaping human comprehension; but that does not sanction nonsense in our language. Rather, the scrunity of this language, as Basil commends it in Amphilochius, is central to how humans, graced with the light of the Spirit of Christ, fulfil his injunction to seek in hope of finding.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Collections of Multiple Authors

Long, A. A. and David Sedley, eds. *The Hellenistic Philosophers.* 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Aetius

Wickham, Lionel, ed. and trans. 'The *Syntagmation* of Aetius the Anomean', *JTS* 19 (1968): 532–69.

Alcinous

Alcinoos: Enseignment des doctrines de Platon, introduction, texte établi et commenté par John Whittaker et traduit par Pierre Louis. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990.

Dillon, John, trans. with introduction and commentary. *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Alexander of Aphrodisias

Moraux, P., ed. *Alexandre d'Aphrodise.* Paris: Droz, 1942.

Wallies, M., ed. *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis in Aristotelis topicorum libros octo commentaria.* CAG 2.2. Berlin: Reimer, 1891.

Ammonius

Busse, A., ed. *Ammonius in Aristotelis de interpretatione commentarius.* CAG 4.5. Berlin: Reimer, 1897.

Aristotle

Ackrill, J. L., trans. *Aristotle: Categories and De Interpretatione.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.

Barnes, Jonathan, ed. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Minio-Paluello, L., ed. *Aristotelis categoriae et liber de interpretatione.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949.

Ross, W. D., ed. *Aristotelis analytica priora et posteriora.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.

Asclepius

Hayduck, M., ed. *Asclepii in Aristotelis metaphysicorum libros A–Z commentaria.* CAG 6.2. Berlin: Reimer, 1888.

Athanasius

Opitz, H. G., ed. *Athanasius Werke*, vol. 2/1. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1940.
Robertson, Archibald, ed. and trans., *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria.* NPNF 4. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.

Basil of Caesarea (See Abbreviations for works of Basil)
Clement of Alexandria

Stählin, Otto, ed. *Clemens Alexandrinus, Zweiter Band: Stromata Buch I–VI*, rev. by Ludwig Früchtel. GCS 52. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960.
—— *Clemens Alexandrinus, Dritter Band: Stromata Buch VII und VIII*... GCS 17. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich's, 1909.

Damascius

Ruelle, C. É., ed. *Damascii successoris dubitationes et solutiones*, 2 vols. Paris: Klincksieck, 1: 1889; 2: 1899 (repr. 1964).

Dexippus

Busse, A., ed. *Dexippi in Aristotelis categorias commentarium.* CAG 4.2, 1888, 1–71.
Dillon, John, trans. *Dexippus: On Aristotle Categories.* London: Duckworth, 1990.

Epiphanius

Holl, Karl, ed. *Epiphanius, Dritter Band: Panarion.* GCS. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich's, 1933.

Eunomius of Cyzicus

Vaggione, Richard Paul, ed. and trans. *Eunomius: The Extant Works.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.

Eusebius of Caesarea

Gifford, Edwin Hamilton, trans. *Eusebius: Preparation for the Gospel*, 2 vols. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002 (orig. pub. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903).

Mras, K., ed. *Eusebius Werke, Band 8: Die Praeparatio evangelica.* GCS 43.1, 43.2. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954, 1956.

Gregory of Nazianzus

Barbel, J., ed. *Die fünf Theologische Reden.* Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1963.

Williams, Frederick, trans. *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: On God and Christ.* Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.

Gregory of Nyssa (See Abbreviations for works of Gregory of Nyssa)

Hierocles

Köhler, F. G., ed. *Hieroclis in aureum Pythagoreorum carmen commentarius.* Stuttgart: Teubner, 1974.

Hippolytus

Marcovich, Miroslav, ed. *Hippolytus. Refutatio omnium haeresium.* Patristische Texte und Studien 25. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986.

Irenaeus of Lyons

Rousseau, Adelin and Louis Doutreleau, eds. *Irénée de Lyon: Contre Les Hérésies.* SC 263, 264, 293, 294, 210, 211. Paris: Cerf, 1974, 1979, 1982.

Justin Martyr

Falls, Thomas B., trans. *St. Justin Martyr.* FoC 6. New York: Heritage, 1948.

Goodspeed, E. J., ed. *Die ältesten Apologeten.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915.

Marcovich, Miroslav., ed. *Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone.* Patristische Texte und Studien 47. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997.

St Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls, rev. Thomas P. Halton, ed. Michael Slusser. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003.

Methodius

Clark, William R., trans. ANF 14. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869.

Valliant, A., ed. and trans. 'Le *De Autexousio* de Méthode d'Olympe: Version Slave et texte Grec édités et traduits en Français', *Patrologia Orientalis* 22.5 (1930): 631–888.

Numenius of Apamea

des Places, Édouard, ed. *Numénius: Fragments.* Paris: Cerf, 1973.

Origen

Crouzel, Henri, and Manlio Simonetti, eds. *Origène: Traité des Principes, Tome I (Livres I et II)*. SC 252. Paris: Cerf, 1978.

Philostorgius

Amidon, Philip R., SJ, trans. *Philostorgius: Church History*. Atlanta: SBL, 2007.

Plato

Burnet, J., ed. *Platonis opera*. OCT. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902–1906.

Taylor, C. C. W., trans. and comm. *Plato: Protagoras*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.

Plotinus

Armstrong, A. H., ed. and trans. *Plotinus*. 7 vols. LCL 440–5, 468. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Henry, Paul, and H.-R. Schwyzer, eds., *Plotini opera*. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964–82.

Porphyry

Barnes, Jonathan, trans. *Porphyry: Introduction*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003.

Busse, A., ed. CAG 4.1. Berlin: Reimer, 1887.

Strange, Steven K., trans. *Porphyry: On Aristotle Categories*. London: Duckworth, 1992.

Proclus

Cousin, V., ed. *Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita*, pt. 3. Paris: Durand, 1864 (repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1961).

Diehl, E., ed. *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, 3 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1: 1903; 2: 1904; 3: 1906 (repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965).

Dodds, E. R., ed. and trans. *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.

Westerink, L. G., ed. *Proclus Diadochus. Commentary on the first Alcibiades of Plato*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1954.

Pseudo-Simplicius

Hayduck, M., ed. *Simplicii in libros Aristotelis de anima commentaria*. CAG 11. Berlin: Reimer, 1882.

Ptolemy

Layton, Bentley, ed. and trans. 'Ptolemy's Epistle to Flora', in *The Gnostic Scriptures*'. New York: Doubleday, 1987, 306–15.
Quispel, Gilles, ed. *Ptolémée: Lettre à Flora.* 2nd edn. SC 24. Paris: Cerf, 1966.

Simplicius

Brittain, Charles, and Tad Brennan, trans. *Simplicius: On Epicetutus' 'Handbook 1–26'.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002.
Diels, H., ed. *Simplicii in Aristotelis physicorum libros octo commentaria*, 2 vols. CAG 9, 10. Berlin: Reimer, 9: 1882; 10: 1895.
Gaskin, Richard., trans. *Simplicius: On Aristotle's 'Categories 9–15'.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000.
Heiberg, J. L., ed. *Simplicii in Aristotelis de caelo commentaria.* CAG 7. Berlin: Reimer, 1894.
Kalbfleisch, K., ed. *Simplicii in Aristotelis categorias commentarium.* CAG 8. Berlin: Reimer, 1907.

Tertullian

Braun, René, ed. *Tertullien: Contre Marcion.* Tome 1. SC 365. Paris: Cerf, 1990.
Evans, Ernest, ed. and trans. *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.

Theodoret of Cyrrhus

Martin, Annick, Pierre Canivet, et al. *Théodoret de Cyr: Histoire Ecclésiastique, Tome I (Livres I–II)*, Greek text by L. Parmentier and G. C. Hansen (GCS n.s. 5, 3rd edn., 1993), with annotation by J. Bouffartigue (SC 501. Paris: Cerf, 2006).

Secondary Sources

Algra, K., Jonathan Barnes, Jaap Mansfeld, and Malcolm Schofeld, eds. *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
Amand de Mendieta, Emmanuel. 'The Pair *ΚΗΡΥΓΜΑ* and *ΔΟΓΜΑ* in the Theological Thought of St. Basil of Caesarea', *JTS* n.s. 16 (1965): 129–42.
—— *The 'Unwritten' and 'Secret' Apostolic Traditions in the Theological Thought of St. Basil of Caesarea.* Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers 13. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965.

Anatolios, Khaled. *Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Andresen, Carl. 'Justin und der mittlere Platonismus', *ZNW* 44 (1952/3): 157–95.

Armstrong, A. Hilary, ed. *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

—— 'The Theory of the Non-Existence of Matter in Plotinus and the Cappadocians', *SP* 5 (1962): 427–9 (repr. in idem., *Plotinian and Christian Studies* (London: Variorum, 1979), VIII).

Ayres, Lewis. 'Athanasius' Initial Defense of the Term 'Ὁμοούσιος: Rereading the *De Decretis*', *JECS* 12.3 (2004): 337–59.

——*Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

——'On the Practice and Teaching of Christian Doctrine', *Gregorianum* 80 (1999): 33–94.

——and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz. 'Basil of Caesarea', in Lloyd Gerson, ed., *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

Balás, David L. *ΜΕΤΟΥΣΙΑ ΘΕΟΥ: Man's Participation in God's Perfections According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*. Rome: Herder & Herder, 1966.

Barnes, Michel René. 'The Background and Use of Eunomius' Causal Language', in Michel R. Barnes and Daniel Williams, eds. *Arianism after Arius*, 217–36.

——'"The Burden of Marriage" and Other Notes on Gregory of Nyssa's *On Virginity*', *SP* 37 (2001): 12–19.

——'*ΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ* and the Anti-Monistic Ontology of Nyssen's *Contra Eunomium*', in Robert C. Gregg, ed., *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments*. Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1985 (repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 327–34).

——'Divine Unity and the Divided Self: Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology in its Psychological Context', *Modern Theology* 18 (2002): 475–96.

——'Eunomius of Cyzicus and Gregory of Nyssa: Two Traditions of Transcendent Causality', *VC* 52 (1998): 59–87.

——'One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic', *SP* 29 (1997): 205–23.

——'The Polemical Context and Content of Gregory of Nyssa's Psychology', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 4 (1994): 1–24.

——*The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology*. Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2001.

Barnes, Michel R. and Daniel H. Williams, eds. *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993.

Barnes, Timothy D. *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics* II/1. New York: Scribner's, 1957.

——*The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. from the 6th edn. by Edwyn C. Hoskins. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Beeley, Christopher A. *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Behr, John. *The Nicene Faith, Parts One and Two*. Formation of Christian Theology 2. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004.

——'The Rational Animal: A Rereading of Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio*', *JECS* 7 (1999): 219–47.

——*The Way to Nicaea*. Formation of Christian Theology 1. Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.

Berchman, Robert M. *From Philo to Origen: Middle Platonism in Transition*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984.

Boys-Stones, G. A. *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Bradshaw, David. *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Braun, René. *Deus Christianorum: Recherches sur le vocabulaire doctrinal de Tertullien*. Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1977.

Brightman, Robert S. 'Apophatic Theology and Divine Infinity in St. Gregory of Nyssa', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 18 (1973): 97–114.

Burnyeat, Myles F. 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good', in Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, ed. *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, 69–92.

Burrell, David. *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986.

Canévet, Mariette. *Grégoire de Nysse et L'Herméneutique Biblique: Étude des rapports entre le langage et la connaissance de Dieu*. Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1983.

Carabine, Deirdre. *The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena*. Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 19. Louvain: Peters/W. B. Eerdmans, 1995.

Chadwick, Henry. 'Philo and the Beginnings of Christian Thought', in A. H. Armstrong, ed. *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, 137–92.

Charles, David. *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000.

Cherniss, Harold. *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa*. New York: Burt Franklin, 1971.

Choufrine, Arkadi. *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis: Studies in Clement of Alexandria's Appropriation of His Background*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002.

Clark, Elizabeth A. *Clement's Use of Aristotle: The Aristotelian Contribution to Clement's Refutation of Gnosticism*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1977.

Cleary, John J. *Aristotle on the Many Senses of Priority*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.

Cooper, John M. 'The Unity of Virtue', in idem, *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Corrigan, Kevin. 'Positive and Negative Matter in Later Platonism: The Uncovering of Plotinus' Dialogue with the Gnostics', in Turner and Majercik, eds. *Gnosticism and Later Platonism*, 19–56.

Cross, Richard. *Duns Scotus on God*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

——'Gregory of Nyssa on Universals', *VC* 56 (2002): 372–410.

Crouzel, Henri. *Origen*, trans. A. S. Worrall. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989.

Daniélou, Jean. 'Eunome l'Arien et l'exégèse néo-platonicienne du Cratyle', *Revue des Études Grecques* 49 (1956): 412–32.

DelCogliano, Mark. 'Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names' (Ph.D. Diss., Emory University, 2009).

——'Eusebian Theologies of the Son as the Image of God before 341', *JECS* 14 (2006): 459–84.

Dillon, John. *Heirs of Plato: A Study of the Old Academy, 347–274 B.C.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

'Logos and Trinity: Patterns of Platonist Influence on Early Christianity', in Godfrey Vesey, ed. *The Philosophy in Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 1–14.

——*The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977.

Dodds, E. R. 'The Parmenides of Plato and the Origin of the Neoplatonic One', *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928): 129–42.

Dörrie, Heinrich, Margarete Altenburger, and Uta Schramm, eds. *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*. Leiden: Brill, 1976.

Drecoll, Volker Henning. *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: Sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neonizäner*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996.

Feltoe, Charles Lett. *St. Dionysius of Alexandria: Letters and Treatises.* London: SPCK, 1918.
Fine, Gail. 'Inquiry in the *Meno*', in Richard Kraut, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 200–26.
Flood, Gavin. *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
Forrest, Peter. 'The Epistemology of Religion', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2006 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2006/entries/religion-epistemology/>.
Franks, Christopher A. 'The Simplicity of the Living God: Aquinas, Barth, and Some Philosophers', *Modern Theology* 21.2 (2005): 275–300.
Frede, Michael., The Ancient Empiricists', in idem, *Essays in Ancient Philosophy.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, 243–60.
——and Polymnia Athanassiadi, eds. *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.
Grant, Robert M. 'Aristotle and the Conversion of Justin', in idem, *After the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 122–6.
——'Notes on Gnosis', *VC* 11 (1957): 145–51.
Hägg, Henny Fiskå. *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Apophaticism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
Hanson, R. P. C. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.
Harrison, Verna E. F. *Grace and Human Freedom According to St. Gregory of Nyssa.* Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992.
Hart, Mark. 'Gregory of Nyssa's Ironic Praise of the Celibate Life', *Heythrop Journal* 33 (1992): 1–19.
——'Reconciliation of Body and Soul: Gregory of Nyssa's Deeper Theology of Marriage', *TS* 51 (1990): 450–78.
Hildebrand, Stephen Marc. 'Linguistic Achievement and Scriptural Exegesis in the Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea'. Ph.D. Diss., Fordham University, 2002.
——*The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth.* Washington, DC: CUA Press, 2007.
Hoffman, Joshua, and Gary S. Rosenkrantz. *The Divine Attributes.* Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.
Hoffman, R. Joseph. *Marcion: On the Restitution of Christianity: An Essay on the Development of Radical Paulinist Theology in the Second Century.* AAR Academy Series 46. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984.
Hübner, Reinhard. 'Gregor von Nyssa als Vorfasser der Sog. Ep. 38 des Basilius: Zum unterschiedlichen Verständnis der οὐσία bei den kappadozischen Brüdern', in Jacques Fontaine and Charles Kannengeiser,

eds. *Epektasis: Mélanges Patristiques Offertes au Cardinal Jean Daniélou.* Paris: Beauschesne, 1972, 463–90.

Hughes, Christopher. *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God: An Investigation in Aquinas' Philosophical Theology.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.

Inwood, Brad and Pierlugi Donini, 'Comments on Professor Görgemann's Paper, *The Two Forms of* Oikeiôsis *in Arius and the Stoa*', in W. W Fortenbaugh, ed. *On Stoic and Peripatetic Ethics: The Work of Arius Didymus* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1983), 190–201.

——'Stoic Ethics', in K. Algra et al., eds. *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, 675–738.

Irwin, Terence. *Aristotle's First Principles.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Jackson-McCabe, Matt. 'The Stoic Theory of Implanted Preconceptions', *Phronesis* 49 (2004): 323–47.

Jakab, Attila. 'Denys d'Alexandrie: réexamen des données biographiques', *Recherches augustiniennes* 32 (2001): 3–37.

Kalligas, Paul. 'Basil of Caesarea on the Semantics of Proper Names', in Katerina Ierodiakonou, ed. *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002, 31–48.

Karras, Valerie A. 'A Revaluation of Marriage, Celibacy, and Irony in Gregory of Nyssa's *On Virginity*', *JECS* 13 (2005): 111–21.

Kopecek, Thomas A. *A History of Neo-Arianism.* 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1979.

Krivocheine, Basil. 'Simplicity of the Divine Nature and the Distinctions in God, According to St. Gregory of Nyssa', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 21 (1977): 76–104.

Ladner, Gerhart B. 'The Philosophical Anthropology of Saint Gregory of Nyssa', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 12 (1958): 59–94.

Laird, Martin. *Gregory of Nyssa and the Grasp of Faith: Union, Knowledge, and Divine Presence.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Langan, John, SJ. 'Augustine on the Unity and the Interconnection of the Virtues', *Harvard Theological Review* 72 (1979): 81–95.

Lienhard, Joseph. *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology.* Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1999.

Lilla, Salvatore R. C. *Clement of Alexandria: A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Lim, Richard. *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.

Lloyd, A. C. 'The Principle that the Cause is greater than its Effects', *Phronesis* 21 (1976): 146–56.

Löhr, Winrich A. 'Did Marcion Distinguish between a Just God and a Good God?' in Gerhard May and Katharina Greschat, eds. *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung*. Vorträge der Internationalen Fachkonferenz zu Marcion, 15.–18. August 2001 in Mainz. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002, 131–46.

——'La Doctrine de Dieu dans la Lettre à Flora de Ptolémée', *RHPR* 75 (1995): 177–91.

Lüdemann, G. 'Zur Geschicte des ältesten Christentums in Rom', *ZNW* 70 (1979): 86–114.

Mann, Friedhelm, ed. *Lexicon Gregorianum: Wörterbuch zu den Schriften Gregors von Nyssa*, 7 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1999–2008.

Mansfeld, Jaap. 'Compatible Alternatives: Middle Platonist Theology and the Xenophanes Reception', in R. van den Broek, T. Baarda, and J. Mansfeld, eds. *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World*. Leiden: Brill, 1988, 92–117.

——*Historiography in Context: Hippolytus'* Elenchos *as a Source for Greek Philosophy*. Philosophia Antiqua 56. Leiden: Brill, 1992.

Markschies, Christoph. 'New Research on Ptolemaeus Gnosticus', *ZAC* 4 (2000): 225–54.

——'Valentinian Gnosticism: Toward the Anatomy of a School', in John D. Turner and Anne McGuire, eds. *The Nag Hammadi Library After Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*. Nag Hammadi and Manichean Studies. Leiden: Brill, 1997, 401–38.

May, Gerhard. 'Die Chronologie des Lebens und der Werke des Gregor von Nyssa', in Marguerite Harl, ed. *Écriture et Culture Philosophique dans la Pensée de Grégoire de Nysse*. Leiden: Brill, 1971, 51–67.

Meredith, Anthony, SJ. 'The Divine Simplicity: *Contra Eunomium* 1.223–241', in Mateo-Seco and Bastero, eds. *El 'Contra Eunomium I'* [see Abbreviations, Works of Gregory of Nyssa, *Eun.*], 339–51.

Miller, Barry. *A Most Unlikely God: A Philosophical Enquiry*. Notre Dame, IN, and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996.

Moore, Sebastian. *The Inner Loneliness*. New York: Crossroad, 1982.

Mortley, Raoul. *Connaissance religieuse et herméneutique chez Clément d'Alexandrie*. Leiden: Brill, 1973.

——*From Word to Silence, II: The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek*. Bonn: Hanstein, 1986.

Mühlenberg, Ekkehard. *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa: Gregors Kritik am Gottesbegriff der klassichen Metaphysik*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966.

Nehamas, Alexander. *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Norris, Jr., Richard A. 'Two Trees in the Midst of the Garden (Genesis 2:9b): Gregory of Nyssa and the Puzzle of Human Evil', in Paul Blowers et al., eds. *In Dominico eloquio=In Lordly Eloquence: Essays in Patristic Exegesis in honor of Robert L. Wilken.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002, 218–41.

O'Brien, Denis. 'La matière chez Plotin: son origine, sa nature', *Phronesis* 44.1 (1999): 45–71.

O'Leary, Joseph. 'Divine Simplicity and the Plurality of Attributes (*CE* II 359–386; 445–560)', in Lenka Karfíková et al., eds., *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II*, 307–38.

Osborn, Eric F. *The Philosophy of Clement of Alexandria.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957.

Parvis, Sara. *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy, 325–345.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Patterson, L. G. *Methodius of Olympus: Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ.* Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1997.

——'Origen, Methodius, and the Arian Dispute', *SP* 18 (1982): 912–23.

Penner, Terry. 'The Unity of Virtue', in Gail Fine, ed. *Plato.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 560–86.

Peroli, Enrico. 'Gregory of Nyssa and the Neoplatonic Doctrine of the Soul', *VC* 51 (1997): 117–39.

Plantinga, Alvin. *Does God Have a Nature?* Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980.

Putnam, Hilary. *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Radde-Gallwitz, Andrew. '*Ad Eustathium de sancta trinitate*', in the Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa's *Opera dogmatica minora*, ed. Volker Henning Drecoll (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming in 2010).

——'*Epinoia* and Initial Concepts: Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa's Defense of Basil', *SP* (forthcoming).

——'Gregory of Nyssa on the Reciprocity of the Virtues', *JTS* n.s. 58.2 (2007): 537–52.

——'Review of *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* by David Bradshaw', *JHP* (forthcoming).

Rist, John M. 'Basil's "Neoplatonism": Its Background and Nature', in Paul J. Fedwick, ed. *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic.* 2 vols. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981, vol. 1, 137–220.

Robertson, David G. 'Relatives in Basil of Caesarea', *SP* 37 (2001): 277–87.

Robertson, David G. 'Stoic and Aristotelian Notions of Substance in Basil of Caesarea', *VC* 52 (1998): 393–417.

Robillard, Edmond. *Justin: l'itinéraire philosophique*. Paris: Cerf, 1989.

Rogers, Eugene. *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.

Ross, James. 'Comments on "Absolute Simplicity"', *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (1985): 383–91.

Rousseau, Philip. *Basil of Caesarea*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994.

Schenkeveld, Dirk M., and Jonathan Barnes, 'Language', in K. Algra et al., eds. *CHHP*, 177–225.

Schoedel, William R. 'Enclosing, not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God', in idem and Robert L. Wilken, eds., *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition: In Honorem Robert M. Grant*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1979, 75–86.

Sedley, David. 'Hellenistic Physics and Metaphysics', in Algra et al., eds. *CHHP*, 355–411.

——'Plato's *Auctoritas* and the Rebirth of the Commentary Tradition', in Jonathan Barnes and Miriam Griffin, eds. *Philosophia Togata II: Plato and Aristotle at Rome*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, 110–29.

Shaw, Teresa M. *The Burden of the Flesh: Fasting and Sexuality in Early Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998.

Silvas, Anna M. *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Smith, J. Warren. *Passion and Paradise: Human and Divine Emotion in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa*. New York: Herder & Herder, 2004.

Stead, Christopher. 'Divine Simplicity as a Problem for Orthodoxy', in Rowan Williams, ed. *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in honour of Henry Chadwick*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 255–69.

——*Divine Substance*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.

——'Ontology and Terminology in Gregory of Nyssa', in Heinrich Dörrie et al., eds. *Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie*, 107–27.

——*Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

——'The Platonism of Arius', *JTS* n.s. 16 (1964): 16–31.

Steel, Carlos. '"Negatio Negationis": Proclus on the Final Lemma of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*', in John J. Cleary, ed. *Traditions of Platonism: Essays in Honour of John Dillon*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, 351–68.

Strange, Steven K. 'Plotinus on the Nature of Eternity and Time', in Lawrence P. Shrenk, ed. *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*. Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1994, 22–53.

——‘Plotinus, Porphyry, and the Neoplatonic Interpretation of the Categories’, *ANRW* 2.36.2 (1987), 955–74.

——‘Plotinus’ Treatise “On the Genera of Being”: An Historical and Philosophical Study’. Ph.D. Diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1981.

Stump, Eleonore, and Norman Kretzmann. ‘Absolute Simplicity’, *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (1985): 353–82.

Szlezák, Thomas A. *Reading Plato*. Trans. Graham Zanker. London: Routledge, 1993.

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Thomassen, Einar. ‘The Derivation of Matter in Monistic Gnosticism’, in Turner and Majercik, eds. *Gnosticism and Later Platonism*, 1–18.

——‘Orthodoxy and Heresy in Second-Century Rome’, *Harvard Theological Review* 97 (2004): 241–56.

——*The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the ‘Valentinians’*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008.

Turner, John D., and Ruth Majercik, eds. *Gnosticism and Later Platonism: Themes, Figures, and Texts*. Atlanta: SBL, 2000.

Tyson, Joseph B. *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006.

Vaggione, Richard. *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

——‘Of Monks and Lounge Lizards: “Arians”, Polemics and Asceticism in the Roman East’, in Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams, eds. *Arianism after Arius*, 181–214.

van der Horst, P. W. and J. Mansfeld. *An Alexandrian Platonist Against Dualism: Alexander of Lycopolis’ Treatise ‘Critique of the Doctrines of Manichaeus’*. Leiden: Brill, 1974.

van Winden, J. C. M. *An Early Christian Philosopher: Justin Martyr’s Dialogue with Trypho, Chapters One to Nine*. Leiden: Brill, 1971.

von Campenhausen, Hans. *The Fathers of the Greek Church*, trans. rev. L. A. Garrard. London: A&C Black, 1963.

Weiswurm, Alcuin A. *The Nature of Human Knowledge According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*. Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1952.

Whittaker, John. ‘Philological Comments on the Neoplatonic Notion of Infinity’, in R. Baine Harris, ed. *The Significance of Neoplatonism*. Norfolk, VA: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1976, 155–72.

Widdicombe, Peter. *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Wiles, Maurice. ‘Eunomius: Hair-Splitting Dialectician or Defender of the Accessibility of Salvation?’ in Rowan Williams, ed. *The Making of*

Orthodoxy: Essays in honour of Henry Chadwick. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 157–72.

——*The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study in the Principles of Early Doctrinal Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

Williams, J. P. *Denying Divinity: Apophasis in the Patristic Christian and Soto Zen Buddhist Traditions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Williams, Rowan D. *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*. Rev. edn. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002.

——'"Is it the Same God?" Reflections on Continuity and Identity in Religious Language', in John H. Whittaker, ed. *The Possibilities of Sense: Essays in honour of D. Z. Phillips*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002, 204–18.

——'The Logic of Arianism', *JTS* n.s. 34 (1983): 56–81.

——'Lossky, the *Via Negativa* and the Foundations of Theology', in idem, *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology*, ed. Mike Higton. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007, 1–24.

——*On Christian Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

——'The Philosophical Structures of Palamism', *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977): 27–44.

Wolinski, J. 'Le Recours aux '*ΕΠΙΝΟΙΑΙ* du Christ dans le *Commentaire sur Jean d'Origène*', in Gilles Dorival and Alain Le Boulluec, eds. *Origeniana Sexta*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995, 465–92.

Zachhuber, Johannes. 'Christological Titles—Conceptually Applied? (*CE* II 294–358)', in Lenka Karfíková et al., eds. *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II*, 257–78.

——*Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

——'Once Again: Gregory of Nyssa on Universals', *JTS* n.s. 56 (2005): 75–98.

Index

Note: Page numbers followed by *n* indicate footnotes.

Aetius, 8, 67–9, 78
conceptualization (*epinoia*, ἐπίνοια) and, 90–6, 143
divine simplicity and, 114
Eunomian controversy and, 87–96, 126, 137
influence on Eunomius of Cyzicus, 88–9, 104, 114
ingeneracy and, 90–6, 104, 118
Syntagmation, 87–90, 93–6
Trinity and, 229
Alcinous, 184*n*
Didaskalikos, 50
first principles of scientific reasoning, 43–4, 44*n*, 51–2
Alexander of Aphrodisias, 33*n*, 84*n*, 124*n*, 159, 159*n*, 159–60, 201*n*
Ammonius, 145*n*, 160*n*
Amphilochius, 109–10, 123–4, 126
Anatolios, Khaled, 80*n*
Anaxagoras, 48
anthropology, of Gregory of Nyssa, 193–5, 218–20
Antiochus of Ascalon, 44*n*
apophaticism. *see* radical apophaticism
Apuleius, 66*n*
Arian controversy. *see* Eunomian controversy
Aristotle
Basil of Caesarea and, 131, 150, 159, 164, 170, 171, 180
Categories, 76, 91–5, 115, 150, 159–60, 170
Clement of Alexandria and, 42–7, 51, 51*n*, 225
De Anima, 159
De mundo (pseudonymous), 150
definitions of first substance, 92–3
epistemology and, 2–3, 45–7
four elements as simple, 21–2, 166
on generation and destruction, 70
indemonstrable principles, 42–4, 58–9
ingeneracy of the cosmos and, 75–7
knowing that versus knowing because, 122–3
Metaphysics, 76–7, 164
moral development and, 128
Organon, 76–7
Physics, 51
Posterior Analytics, 42, 46
Unmoved Mover and, 230
Arius, 79, 88
asceticism, 113, 128–9, 174, 189, 194
Asterius, 79
Athanasius of Alexandria, 20
De decretis, 81, 82–3, 86
De Synodis, 81, 89, 90–1
divine simplicity and, 67, 69, 74, 78–86, 233
essential complements of God and, 106–7, 157
On the Incarnation, 186
On the Opinion of Dionysius, 74
Orations Against the Arians, 80
Athanassiadi, Polymnia, 22*n*, 36*n*
Atticus, 56*n*, 71*n*
Augustine, Saint, 5–6, 22, 64, 232
Ayres, Lewis, 5*n*, 9, 20*n*, 35*n*, 68*n*, 79*n*, 80*n*, 82, 82*n*, 87–8, 88*n*, 114*n*, 118*n*, 133*n*, 136, 136*n*, 137*n*, 172*n*, 228*n*

Balás, David, 153*n*, 195, 195*n*, 203, 203*n*
baptism
Basil of Caesarea and, 119, 168–9
Trinity and, 168–9
Barnes, Jonathan, 42*n*, 47*n*, 131*n*, 135*n*, 145*n*, 150*n*, 165*n*, 201*n*
Barnes, Michel René, 9, 33, 33*n*, 78*n*, 114*n*, 170–1, 171*n*, 183, 183*n*, 184*n*, 202*n*, 215*n*

Barnes, Timothy D., 26*n*, 81*n*
Barth, Karl, 19, 19*n*, 54*n*
Basil of Ancyra, 90, 96, 117*n*
Basil of Caesarea, 113–74
absolute versus relative terms and, 131–2, 181–2
Against Eunomius, 89, 98–100, 107, 116–20, 127, 129–30, 132–3, 135–7, 139–40, 143, 156, 161, 162, 168, 204–7, 217
Aristotle and, 131, 150, 159, 164, 170, 171, 180
common usage principle, 114–22, 146–9
common versus particular and, 132–7
conceptualization (*epinoia*, ἐπίνοια) and, 143–54
Creator and, 118–19
death of, 173
doctrinal reading of scripture, 169–74
doctrine of simplicity, 113–14, 122–42, 154–74, 218–19
doxology, 161–2
essential complements of God and, 107, 157, 162–9
Eunomius of Cyzicus versus, 89, 98–9, 107, 116–20, 125–6, 135–7, 139–40, 161–2, 170–2, 180, 227
on exact investigation of theological language, 1
Gregory of Nyssa defence of, 177–82
Gregory of Nyssa versus, 175–6
Homilies on the Hexaemeron, 130, 162–9, 200, 202–3
Homoians and, 118–20
identity thesis and, 111–12, 125, 156
ingeneracy and, 121–2, 126, 130–1, 139–40, 156–8, 182
knowing how versus knowing what, 129–31
knowing that versus knowing what, 122–9
Letters, 122–4, 126–8, 135–6
negative theology of, 124, 137–42, 154
On the Holy Spirit, 1, 117*n*, 158, 159*n*, 235
positive versus negative terms and, 124, 137–42, 154
power and, 170–4
priority of definition principle and, 108–10, 124, 126–7, 129–31
problem of theological epistemology and, 8
transformation of divine simplicity, 6, 36, 225–35
Trinity and, 113–14, 120–1, 132–3, 135–7, 168–9, 172–4, 229
unity of God, 154–69
Behr, John, 74*n*, 78*n*, 79*n*, 136, 150*n*, 191*n*
belief, epistemology of, 45–7
Berchman, Robert M., 43*n*, 55*n*, 58*n*, 60*n*, 64*n*
Blowers, Paul, 219*n*
Boys-Stones, G. A., 38*n*
Bradshaw, David, 222, 222*n*, 223, 233*n*
Braun, René, 25*n*, 26*n*
Brightman, Robert S., 175–6*n*, 222
Burnyeat, M. F., 123*n*
Burrell, David, 6*n*, 35*n*

Cappadocians. *See* Basil of Caesarea; Gregory of Nyssa
Carabine, Deirdre, 227*n*
Choufrine, Arkadi, 52*n*, 56*n*
Christ. *see also* Trinity
conceptualization (*epinoia*, ἐπίνοια) of, 22, 49, 60–1, 150
as polyonymous, 150–1
as Son, 22, 49, 60–1, 64–5, 80–1, 116–18, 183
Cicero, 44*n*
Clark, Elizabeth A., 56*n*
Cleary, John J., 46*n*, 85*n*, 139*n*
Clement of Alexandria, 38–59
apophaticism of, 3–5, 10, 12, 39, 40, 49–59, 113, 225, 227
Aristotle and, 42–7, 51, 51*n*, 225
on Christian faith as scientific knowledge, 38–9
doubleness of divine and, 56–7
first principles of scientific reasoning, 42–4
negative theology of, 3–5, 10, 12, 39, 40, 49–59, 113, 140, 225, 227
Paedagogus, 58
philosophical background of, 42–3

Stromateis, 39–41, 44–6, 49–50, 55, 59, 60, 222–3
theology as science and, 12, 38–9, 40–9
common usage principle
Basil of Caesarea and, 114–22, 146–9
defined, 115
Gregory of Nyssa and, 121
ordinary language versus, 117–18, 120–1, 141–2
tension with purification, 115–22
conceptualization (*epinoia*, ἐπίνοια)
Aetius and, 90–6, 143
Basil of Caesarea and, 143–54
as basis of all theology, 178–9
of Christ as Son, 22, 49, 60–1, 64–5, 80–1, 116–18, 183
common usage and, 146–9
as concept versus reflection, 148–9, 154
doctrine of multiple conceptualizations, 151–2
Eunomius of Cyzicus and, 96–104, 143, 145–7, 149, 228
first idea and, 177–8
of God as Father, 22, 39, 49, 60–1, 64–5, 80–1, 116–18, 181, 193
of God as ingenerate, 97–8, 156–7. *see also* ingeneracy
of goods, 62, 158, 178
Gregory of Nyssa and, 62, 158, 175–6, 177–82, 222
as manipulation, 99–100
ontology as based on, 179
Origen and, 59–66, 151
predicates based on, 98–9, 131–2, 138, 141
rehabilitation of category, 112
role in broader theological epistemology, 13
as survey versus concept, 148
use in scripture, 146, 149–52
consistency, of God, 6–7, 22, 23
Constantius, 88, 118
contradiction
among divine attributes, 6–8, 19–37
Eunomian controversy and, 95–6
incarnation and, 186–7
law of non-contradiction versus, 20, 21
Cooper, John M., 208*n*
Corinthians, 61, 170, 183
Corrigan, Kevin, 227*n*
cosmos, ingeneracy of, 75–7
Council of Constantinople (360), 88–9
Council of Constantinople (381), 69
Council of Nicaea (325), 79, 82, 86
Council of Seleucia (359), 89, 118
creation
Basil of Caesarea and, 118–19
Ptolemaeus Gnosticus (Ptolemy) and, 28–30, 187
Cross, Richard, 175*n*, 216*n*, 216–17

Daniélou, Jean, 103*n*
De mundo (pseudo-Aristotle), 150
Decalogue, 29–30
Deferrari, Roy, 126*n*
deism, 230–1
DelCogliano, Mark, 79*n*, 171*n*, 180*n*
Des Places, Édouard, 34, 34*n*
Dexippus, 92*n*, 92–4, 147, 147*n*
Commentary on Aristotle's Categories, 91–3
Didymus the Blind, Eunomian controversy and, 87
Dillon, John, 44*n*, 50*n*, 51*n*, 56*n*, 57*n*, 63*n*, 65–6*n*, 92*n*, 210*n*
Dionysius of Alexandria
identity thesis and, 67–9, 73–8
ingeneracy and, 67–8, 73–8, 152, 213
Refutation and Defence, 74
distinguishing marks, in common versus particular, 132–5
divine attributes, 1–2. *see also* divine essence
Aetius and, 114
Basil of Caesarea and, 167
contradiction among, 6–8, 19–37
Eunomius of Cyzicus and, 3, 23, 26, 39, 59, 63, 66–8, 81–2, 87–96, 114
goodness, 24–7, 65, 158–62, 173–4
as one of goods, 173–4, 184–5
indivisibility, 52–3
infinity, 52–3
ingeneracy. *see* ingeneracy
partlessness, 106–8
as propria, 162–9, 178, 225. *see also* divine essence

divine attributes, (*cont.*)
simplicity. *see* divine simplicity
uniqueness, 106–8
unity, 58–9, 101–4, 154–69
unknowability, 41–9, 54–5, 58–9
divine essence. *see also* ingeneracy; proprium/propria (τὸ ἴδιον, ἡ ἰδιότης)
Athanasius of Alexandria and, 84–6
Dionysius of Alexandria and, 75
Eunomius of Cyzicus and, 81–2, 106–8
goodness and, 190–1, 196–212
Gregory of Nyssa and, 190–1, 196–212, 221–4
heterousians and, 88
priority of definition principle and, 3, 108–10, 124, 126–7, 129–31, 228
substance versus, 216
divine freedom, 233–4
divine perfection, 183
divine simplicity
Aetius and, 90–6
Aristotelian elements as simple, 21–2, 166
Athanasius of Alexandria and, 67, 69, 74, 78–86, 233
Basil of Caesarea and, 113–14, 122–42, 154–74, 218–19
Clement of Alexandria and, 39–40, 45, 52, 57–9, 64
conceptualizations and, 59–66
contradiction among divine attributes and, 6–8, 19–37
doctrinal reading of scripture and, 169–74
Eunomian controversy and, 87–96
Eunomius of Cyzicus and, 93–8, 106–8, 116–18, 162, 170, 212–13, 225–6, 233
grammar of divinity and, 20, 35–6, 173–4
Gregory of Nyssa and, 165, 183, 212–21
Marcion of Sinope controversies, 19–20, 22, 23–30, 210
Negative doctrine versus positive, 113–14, 120–1
Numenius of Apamea on, 22, 34–7
Origen on, 20, 22, 64, 103
Ptolemaeus Gnosticus on, 26–37
theological epistemology versus, 1–2, 4–5, 8–9, 11–12, 96
transformation of, 6, 36, 225–35
divine unity, 58–9, 101–4, 154–69, 181, 213–14
Dodds, E. R., 51*n*, 54
Dörrie, Heinrich, 234*n*
Douglass, Scot, 177*n*
Doutreleau, Louis, 27*n*
Drecoll, Volker Henning, 114*n*, 125*n*

energeia, 221–3
Epicureanism, 41, 47, 74, 147, 180, 225
Epicurus, 41*n*
epinoia. See conceptualization (*epinoia*, ἐπίνοια)
Epiphanius of Salamis, 27*n*
epistemology
Aristotelian origins of, 2–3, 45–7
of belief, 45–7
of Clement of Alexandria, 45–7
contemporary, 40*n*
essence versus substance, xx, 2–3
of perception, 45–7
of Plato, 2–3, 47, 48*n*, 196
priority of definition principle, 3, 108–10, 124, 126–7, 129–31, 228
of science, 45–9
theological epistemology versus, 2–3. *see also* theological epistemology
of understanding, 45–7
Erasmus, 27*n*
essence
activities versus, 11, 35
divine. *see* divine essence
epistemology and, xx, 2–3
of God. *see* divine essence
reliable knowledge versus, 3
substance versus, xix-xx, 6, 22, 36–7, 168–9, 201, 216
essential complements (τὰ συμπληροῦντα τὴν οὐσίαν or similar), 83–5, 106–8, 157, 162–9
essential identity, 203
ethical knowledge, 127–8
Eudoxius of Antioch, 118

Eunomian controversy, 87–96, 126, 137, 228–9
Eunomius of Cyzicus, 9, 11–12, 54, 96–112
Apology, 88–90, 97–8, 105, 110, 119–20
Apology for the Apology, 88, 89, 98, 99–100, 105, 107, 111, 143, 157, 173, 215
attributes of God and, 3, 23, 26, 39, 59, 63, 66–8, 73, 78, 81–2, 87–96, 114
Basil of Caesarea versus, 89, 98–9, 107, 116–20, 125–6, 135–7, 139–40, 161–2, 170–2, 180, 227
conceptualization (*epinoia*, *ἐπίνοια*) and, 96–104, 143, 145–7, 228
confession of divine unity, 101–4, 181
divine simplicity and, 93–8, 106–8, 116–18, 162, 170, 212–13, 225–6, 233
divine unity and, 101–4, 181, 213–14
essential complements of God and, 106–7, 157
goods as propria, 200–7, 214–17
grammatical absolutes and, 181–2
Gregory of Nyssa versus, 143, 162, 199–200, 214–17, 227
identity thesis and, 5–6, 96–112
influence of Aetius on, 88–9, 104, 114
ingeneracy and, 68–70, 96–8, 104–5, 107, 110, 111, 118, 152–4, 155, 162, 181, 182, 235
knowledge of divine Reality and, 96–104
law of divine providence and, 103–4, 180
Meno's paradox and, 123–4, 196
privation and, 98, 104–5
problem of theological epistemology and, 8
real versus unreal and, 147
Eusebians, 79–80, 88
Eusebius of Caesarea, 79–81
Ecclesiastical History and, 73–4
Preparation for the Gospel, 34, 73–5
Eusebius of Nicomedia, 79–80
exegesis, 22–3, 61, 169, 171–2
Father. *see also* Trinity
God as, 22, 39, 49, 60–1, 64–5, 80–1, 116–18, 169–70, 181, 183
Saviour versus, 29–31
Son versus, 29–31, 63–4, 134–7
Fedwick, Paul J., 116*n*
Ferguson, Everett, 186*n*
Fifth Sirmian Council, 118–19
Flood, Gavin, 194
formula of being, 154–5, 166
Franks, Christopher A., 19*n*
Frede, Michael, 22*n*, 36*n*, 121*n*
Frege, Gottlob, 151*n*

Galen, 33*n*, 124*n*
Gavrilyuk, Paul L., 8*n*
generacy, 8. *see also* ingeneracy
Gnosticus. *see* Ptolemaeus Gnosticus (Ptolemy)
God
as active, 19–20
and adversary in Ptolemaic view, 30–2
agency and, 22, 229–30
apatheia of, 119
attributes of. *see* divine attributes
consistency of, 6–7, 22, 23
contradiction among divine attributes, 6–8, 19–37
defining, 77
derivation of term, 202
doubleness in Ptolemaic view, 31–3, 34–5
doxology in glorifying, 161–2, 179–80
essence of. *see* divine essence
essential complements, 83–5, 106–8, 157, 162–9
as Father, 22, 39, 49, 60–1, 64–5, 80–1, 116–18, 181, 193
goodness and, 24–7, 65, 158–60
human knowledge of, 1–3, 21–2, 39–40
as ingenerate, 97–8, 156–7. *see also* ingeneracy
intrinsic properties of, 13–14
Justin Martyr and, 72–3
logical principles concerning, 20
as mediator in Ptolemaic view, 30–3, 35–6

God (*cont.*)
  multiple forms/names of, 31–7, 55–7, 63–4. *see also* Trinity
  in positive versus negative theology, 4–5
  power of, 53*n*
  principles concerning, 20. *see also* divine simplicity
  in Ptolemaic division of Law laid down through Moses, 29, 30–7
  as simple, 5. *see also* divine simplicity
  as substance, 64
  in threefold division of the Law of Moses, 29–37
  unknowability of, 41–9, 54–5, 58–9, 88
goodness, 24–7, 65
  divine substance as concurrent with, 158–62, 167
  as one of goods, 182, 184, 200
  Gregory of Nyssa and, 190–1, 196–212, 218–19
  incarnation and, 173–4
  as intrinsic property, 13–14
goods, 182–212
  conceptualization (*epinoia*, *ἐπίνοια*) of, 62, 158, 178
  divine, 173–4, 184–5
  limitation by opposites, 185, 186–8
  list of, 182–3, 184–5, 200, 210–12
  nature of, 62, 182–3
  as propria, 200–7, 214–17
  reciprocity of, 202–12
  relation to divine nature or essence, 185, 196–212
  true versus false, 185, 188–95
grammar of divinity, 20, 35–6, 173–4
Grant, R. M., 27*n*
Gregg, Robert C., 184*n*
Gregory of Nazianzus
  divine simplicity and, 22
  Eunomian controversy and, 87, 87*n*, 100, 227
Gregory of Nyssa, 175–224
  Against Eunomius, 143, 176, 180, 226
  Against the Macedonians on the Holy Spirit, 203–4
  anthropology of, 193–5, 218–20
  appointment as bishop of Nyssa, 1
  Basil of Caesarea versus, 175–6
  Catechetical Oration, 195, 202, 210, 214
  common usage principle and, 121
  conceptualization (*epinoia*, *ἐπίνοια*) and, 62, 158, 175–6, 177–82, 221–2
  death of, 87
  defence of Basil of Caesarea, 177–82
  defenders of, 221–4
  divine goods and, 173, 176, 207–12, 221–4
  divine simplicity and, 212–20
  doctrine of simplicity, 165, 183, 221
  doxology in glorifying God, 179–80
  on essence versus substance, xix–xx, 168–9
  essential complements of God and, 107
  Eunomius of Cyzicus versus, 143, 162, 199–200, 214–17, 227
  goodness and, 190–1, 196–212, 218–19
  identity thesis and, 12*n*, 111–12
  incomprehensibility and, 175
  ingeneracy and, 179, 182
  Life of Moses, 196–7
  Marcion of Sinope controversies and, 25
  negative theology of Basil of Caesarea and, 140–1
  On the Beatitudes, 197, 211, 223
  On the Making of Humanity, 178, 219–20
  On the Song of Songs, 189–90, 193
  On the Soul of Resurrection, 178, 219–20
  On Virginity, 185, 190–1, 193–4, 202–3
  positive doctrine of God and, 182–212
  power and, 9, 183–4, 199
  problem of theological epistemology and, 8
  To Ablabius: On Not Three Gods, 198
  To the Greeks from Common Nations, 200–1
  transformation of divine simplicity, 6, 36, 225–35
  Trinity and, 196–7, 200, 215–18

Hägg, Henny Fiskå, 49*n*
Hall, Stuart G., 204–7, 214*n*, 226*n*

Hanson, R. P. C., 79*n*, 114*n*, 120*n*
Harnack, Adolf von, 28*n*, 120*n*
Harrington, L. Michael, 227*n*
Harris, R. Baines, 51*n*
Harrison, Verna E. F., 175*n*, 222
Hart, Mark, 190–1*n*
Heracleianus, 214*n*
heterousians, 88, 95, 120–1, 128–9
Hierocles, 160*n*
Hilary of Poitiers, 118
Hildebrand, Stephen Marc, 114*n*, 139*n*, 139–40, 173*n*
Hoffman, Joshua, 5*n*
Holl, Karl, 29*n*
Homoians, 118–20
homoiousians, 90, 118–20, 169, 173
Hughes, Christopher, 5*n*
hypostasis, 80, 135–6

identity thesis
  Aetius and, 90–6
  Basil of Caesarea and, 111–12, 125, 156
  defined, 97
  Dionysius of Alexandria and, 67–9, 73–8
  essential identity and, 203
  Eunomius of Cyzicus and, 5–6, 96–112
  Gregory of Nyssa and, 12*n*, 111–12
  Justin Martyr and, 67–73
  nature of, 5–6
  opponents versus supporters of, 5–6
  Origen and, 62–4, 79–80
  semantic and ontological identity and, 111
  Stead's criticism of, 10–12
  synonymity principle and, 110–12, 145
immortality, Justin Martyr and, 70
immutability, 63
incarnation
  divine virtues and, 211–12, 229–30
  fittingness of, 186–8
  goodness and, 173–4
incorruptibility
  Eunomius of Cyzicus and, 111
  as one of goods, 182, 184, 185
  Gregory of Nyssa and, 198
  Justin Martyr and, 70, 73
indemonstrable principles
  of Aristotle, 42–4, 58–9
  of Christian revelation, 48–9
  of Clement of Alexandria, 55–6
indivisibility, as divine attribute, 52–3
infinity, as divine attribute, 52–3
ingeneracy, 8, 69–78
  Aetius and, 90–6, 104, 118
  alternate meanings of, 94
  Aristotle and, 75–6
  Basil of Caesarea and, 121–2, 126, 130–1, 139–40, 156–8, 182
  defining, 76–7
  Dionysius of Alexandria and, 67–8, 73–8, 152, 213
  as divine attribute, 13, 26, 75–8
  Eunomian controversy and, 87–96
  Eunomius of Cyzicus and, 68–70, 96–8, 104–8, 110, 111, 118, 152–4, 155, 162, 181, 182, 235
  fatherhood and, 134–7
  Gregory of Nyssa and, 179, 182
  Justin Martyr and, 68, 69–73, 78, 152
inseparable properties, 202–3
Inwood, Brad, 120*n*, 127*n*
Irenaeus of Lyons
  divine simplicity and, 22
  Marcion of Sinope controversies and, 24–8, 25*n*, 30
Irwin, Terence, 43, 43*n*

John, Gospel of
  Commentary on John (Origen), 59–66, 149–50
  Eunomius and, 103, 169
  John 14:28, 169–72
  prologue, 29
John Philoponus, 159
justice
  as one of goods, 182, 210–12
  as virtue, 209–10
Justin Martyr
  Dialogue with Trypho, 70–3
  identity thesis and, 67–73
  ingeneracy and, 68, 69–73, 78, 152
  Marcion of Sinope controversies and, 24

Karfiková, Lenka, 177*n*
Karras, Valerie, 191*n*
knowledge
  Christian knower and, 47–9
  definitional, 3, 108–10, 124, 126–7, 129–31, 228
  dialectic of, 38–9, 47–9
  of divine Reality, 96–8, 201
  doctrine of simplicity of Basil of Caesarea and, 122–42
  ethical, 127–8
  human knowledge of God, 1–3, 21–2, 39–40
  knowing how versus knowing what, 129–31
  knowing that versus knowing because, 122–3
  knowing that versus knowing what, 122–9
  unknowability of God, 41–9, 54–5, 58–9, 88
Kopecek, Thomas A., 89*n*, 109*n*, 118, 118*n*, 147*n*, 228
Kretzmann, Norman, 5*n*, 11*n*, 11–12
Krivocheine, Basil, 222*n*

Laird, Martin, 190*n*
Langan, John P., 209, 209*n*
Le Boulluec, Alain, 53–4, 64*n*
Lienhard, Joseph, 79*n*
life
  as one of goods, 110, 182, 184, 200
  as intrinsic property, 13–14
light
  as one of goods, 110, 182, 184, 200, 223
  as intrinsic property, 13–14
Lilla, Salvatore R. C., 41*n*, 42*n*, 43*n*, 46*n*, 55*n*, 56*n*
Lim, Richard, 120*n*, 120–1, 227, 227*n*
Lloyd, A. C., 171*n*
Logos, 43, 55*n*, 63*n*, 80–1
Löhr, Winrich, 24*n*, 32*n*, 33–4
Long, Anthony, 47, 127*n*
Louth, Andrew, 229*n*
loving disposition, 190
Lucius, 92*n*

Malherbe, Abraham J., 186*n*
Mansfield, Jaap, 53*n*
Marcion of Sinope, controversies surrounding, 19–20, 22, 23–30, 210
Markschies, Christoph, 26–9*n*, 28, 28*n*, 29*n*
May, Gerhard, 24*n*, 214*n*
Meno's paradox, 123–4, 196
Meredith, Anthony, 204*n*
metaphysics, essence versus substance, xx
Methodius of Olympus, 78, 79, 213
Middle Platonism, 34, 43–4, 49–51, 56
Moderatus, 51
monads, 57–8
monotheism, divine simplicity and, 22
Moore, Sebastian, 229*n*
Moore, William, 204–7
moral development, 127–8
Mortley, Raoul, 5*n*, 44*n*, 56*n*, 58*n*, 91–4, 100*n*
Moses, 27–37
Mühlenberg, Ekkehard, 178*n*

negative theology
  of Basil of Caesarea, 124, 137–42, 154
  of Clement of Alexandria, 3–5, 12, 39, 40, 49–59, 140, 225, 227
  development of, 51–2
  Platonism and, 51–2, 94
  positive theology versus, 4–5
  Stead and, 10–12
Nehamas, Alexander, 190*n*
Neoplatonism, 91–2, 115–16, 131, 138–9, 147, 155, 160–1
Nicene Creed, 82, 86, 88, 169
Nicene orthodoxy, 20
Nicostratus, 92*n*
non-acquired properties, 203–4
Norris, Richard A., Jr., 219*n*
Numenius of Apamea
  divine simplicity and, 22, 34–7
  influences on Ptolemy, 33*n*, 33–5
  On the Good, 34

O'Leary, Joseph S., 54*n*, 177*n*, 221*n*
Opitz, H. G., 85*n*
Orations Against the Arians (Athanasius of Alexandria), 80
Organon (Aristotle), 76–7
Origen

Commentary on Jeremiah, 61, 65
Commentary on John, 59, 62–6, 149–50
conceptualization (*epinoia*, ἐπίνοια) and, 59–66, 151
divine simplicity and, 20, 22, 64, 103
identity thesis and, 62–4, 79–80
On Prayer, 63, 66

Paedagogus (Clement of Alexandria), 58
Palamas, Gregory, 221–2
Palamism, 221–2
partlessness, as divine attribute, 106–8
Parvis, Sara, 79*n*
passion of vice, 187
Patterson, L. G., 78*n*
Paul, 19–20, 29–30, 61, 62, 74
Penner, Terry, 208*n*, 209*n*
perception
Clement of Alexandria and, 44
epistemology of, 45–7
Peripateticism, 41, 120*n*
Philo, 33*n*
Philostorgius, 89*n*
phusis, 222–3
Plantinga, Alvin, 5*n*
Plato, 9–10
Cratylus, 180*n*
epistemology and, 2–3, 47, 48*n*, 196
on generation and destruction, 70
Meno, 47, 196 *see also* Meno's paradox
Parmenides, 49–51, 53, 56, 57, 131
Philebus, 190
Protagoras, 71*n*, 187
Socratic dialogues, 3*n*, 93, 164, 269
Timaeus, 51*n*, 76
Platonism, 27, 32–4, 36–7, 41. *see also* Neoplatonism
ingeneracy and debate with Christianity, 68, 69–78, 84
Middle, 34, 43–4, 49–51, 56
negative theology and, 51–2, 94
of Numenius of Apamea, 22, 36
Plotinus, 4–5, 60, 64, 92*n*, 115, 147, 147*n*, 148, 159, 164*n*, 171, 218*n*
doctrine of the One, 230
Enneads, 164
Plutarch, 47*n*, 102–3*n*
Pneumatology, 167
polyonymy principle, 150–1
polytheism, 212–13
Porphyry, 61*n*, 134–5, 169, 203–4
Commentary on Aristotle's Categories, 150, 159–60
Isagôgê, 131, 165
power
Basil of Caesarea and, 170–4
of God, 53*n*
as one of goods, 110, 182, 184, 210–12
Gregory of Nyssa and, 9, 183–4, 199
as intrinsic property, 13–14
Ptolemaic view of God and, 35
unity of, 173
Prestige, G. L., 68*n*
priority of definition, 3, 108–10, 124, 126–7, 129–31, 228
privation
Eunomius of Cyzicus and, 98, 104–5
positive versus negative terms, 137–42
words for God and, 114
Proclus, 54
proprium/propria (τὸ ἴδιον, ἡ ἰδιότης)
accidents versus, 164–5
defined, 107–8
divine attributes as, 162–9, 178, 225. *see also* divine essence
goods as propria of divine nature, 200–7
nature of, 77, 107, 134–5
non-essential necessity and, xx–xxi
Pseudo-Dionysius, 139–41
Ptolemaeus Gnosticus (Ptolemy), 7–8, 26–37, 68, 230
creation of the world and, 28–30, 187
God as mediator, 30–3, 35–6
Law laid down through Moses and, 27–37
Letter to Flora, 22–3, 26–9
Marcion of Sinope controversies and, 22–3, 24, 26, 210
threefold division of Law of Moses, 29–37
purification
Basil of Caesarea and, 115–22

purification (*cont.*)
Gregory of Nyssa and, 219–20
tension with common usage principle, 115–22
Putnam, Hilary, 40*n*, 227*n*

Quintilianus, Aristides, 33*n*
Quispel, Gilles, 27*n*, 28*n*, 29*n*

Radde-Gallwitz, Andrew, 133*n*
radical apophaticism
of Basil of Caesarea, 124, 137–42
of Clement of Alexandria, 3–5, 10, 39, 40, 49–59, 113, 225, 227
traditional, 227
religious epistemology, theological epistemology versus, 4
Richardson, Cyril C., 178*n*, 213*n*
Rist, John M., 116*n*
Robertson, David G., 114*n*, 116, 116*n*, 132*n*
Rogers, Eugene, 228*n*
Rorty, Amélie Oksenberg, 123*n*
Rorty, Richard, 40*n*
Rosenkranz, Gary S., 5*n*
Rousseau, Philip, 89*n*, 113*n*, 115*n*, 144*n*, 145*n*

Sabellianiasm, 74–5, 77–8
Sabellius, 68
Schenkeveld, Dirk M., 47*n*, 145*n*
Schoedel, William R., 83*n*
science
epistemology of, 45–9
theology as, 12, 38–9, 40–9
Sedley, David, 47, 127*n*
Sesboüé, Bernard, 131*n*, 139, 144*n*, 146*n*, 148*n*
Shaw, Teresa M., 194*n*
Silvas, Anna M., 175*n*, 191*n*, 214*n*
Simplicius, 75–6, 76*n*, 92–3, 147*n*, 160, 160*n*, 188*n*
Smith, J. Warren, 191*n*, 212*n*, 218*n*
Smith, Nicholas D., 3*n*
Socrates, 93, 164, 209
Son. *See also* Trinity
Christ as, 22, 49, 60–1, 64–5, 80–1, 116–18, 183
Father versus, 29–31, 63–4, 134–7

Stead, G. Christopher, 9*n*, 9–14, 10*n*, 19, 116*n*, 221–2, 234*n*
ingeneracy and, 76–7, 78*n*
language of simplicity and, 21, 230–1
negative theology and, 10–12
particular providence/prevenient grace and, 10–12
Steel, Carlos, 85*n*, 139*n*
Stoicism, 41, 47, 66, 102–3, 119–20*n*, 132, 149, 150, 188, 225
Strange, Steven K., 72*n*, 84*n*, 115*n*
Strawley, James Herbert, 178*n*
Stump, Eleanore, 5*n*, 11*n*, 11–12
substance (*οὐσία*), 135–6, 217, 221–3
Aristotle's definition of first substance, 92–3
bundle theory of, 166
divine, 158–62, 167
essence versus, xix-xx, 6, 22, 36–7, 168–9, 201, 216
formula of substance versus formula of being, 154–5, 166
God as, 64
synonymy principle, 110–12, 145

Taylor, Charles, 231, 231*n*
terminology conventions, xix-xxi
Tertullian, Marcion of Sinope controversies and, 24–6, 25*n*, 26*n*, 28, 30
Theodoret of Cyrrhus, 88*n*
theological epistemology
of Aetius, 90–6
attribution of properties to God, 2–3
of Basil of Caesarea. *see* Basil of Caesarea
of Clement of Alexandria, 3, 4–5, 12, 38–59
contradiction and, 6–8, 19–37
defined, 2, 4, 182
divine simplicity versus, 1–2, 4–5, 8–9, 11–12, 96
of Eunomius of Cyzicus, 96–112
general epistemology versus, 2–3
of Gregory of Nyssa. *see* Gregory of Nyssa
of Origen, 59–66
properties of God in, 2
religious epistemology versus, 4

terminology used by theologians, 68
transformation of divine simplicity, 6, 36, 225–35
Theophrastus, 44*n*, 45*n*, 120*n*
Thomas Aquinas, 5, 5*n*, 5–6, 64, 228–9
Thomassen, Einar, 23*n*, 26*n*
Thomism, 221, 232–3
Timothy, 128
transformation of divine simplicity, 6, 36, 225–35
Trinity
Basil of Caesarea and, 113–14, 120–1, 132–3, 135–7, 168–9, 172–4, 229
Gregory of Nyssa and, 196–7, 200, 215–18
relations between Trinitarian persons, 234–5
truth, as one of goods, 182, 223
Tyson, Joseph B., 20*n*, 24*n*

Unmoved Mover (Aristotle), 230

Vaggione, Richard Paul, 54, 54*n*, 89*n*, 96*n*, 96–7, 97*n*, 102*n*, 103*n*, 105*n*, 108*n*, 110*n*, 111*n*, 115*n*, 121*n*, 128–9, 129*n*, 143*n*, 215*n*
van den Broek, R., 53*n*
virtues, unity of, 25, 207–12

Weiswurm, Alcuin, 179, 179*n*
Whittaker, John, 50*n*, 51, 51*n*
Wickham, Lionel, 88*n*, 90*n*, 93*n*, 94*n*, 126
Widdicombe, Peter, 63*n*, 64*n*, 77*n*, 84*n*
Wiles, Maurice, 23*n*, 63*n*, 96, 96*n*
Wilken, Robert L., 83*n*
Williams, Daniel, 183*n*
Williams, J. P., 226*n*
Williams, Rowan, 7, 7*n*, 9*n*, 20, 20*n*, 65*n*, 68*n*, 78*n*, 79*n*, 96*n*, 141*n*, 177*n*, 227*n*, 232*n*
Wilson, Henry A., 204–7
wisdom
essence versus, 197
as one of goods, 182, 210–12
as intrinsic property, 13–14
Wolinski, J., 64*n*, 65*n*

Xenocrates, 42*n*

Zachhuber, Johannes, 177*n*, 206*n*, 216*n*, 216–17